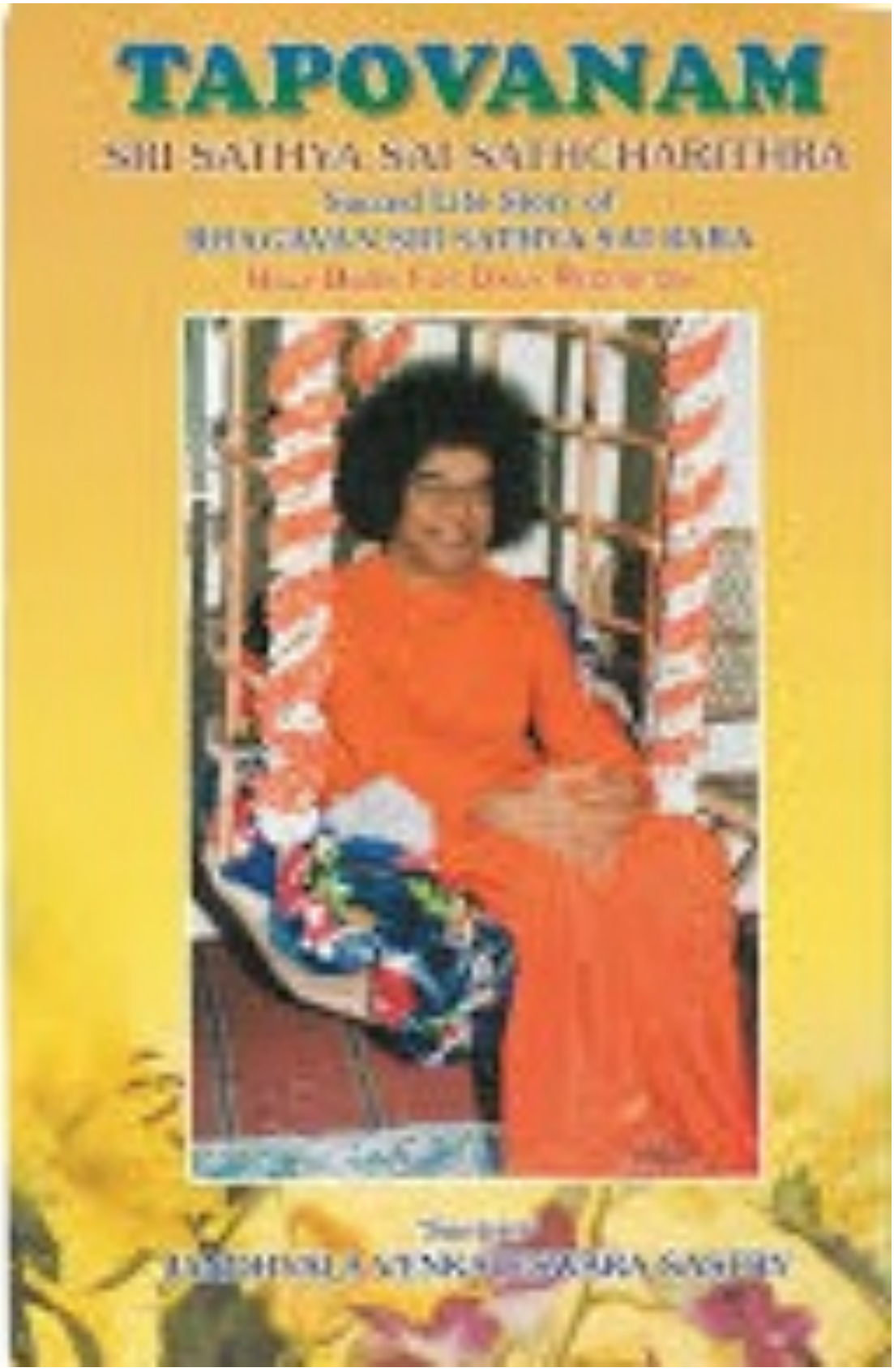
TAPOVANAM
SRI SATHYA SAI SATHCHARITHRA

THAPOVANAM

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Sacred Life Story of
Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba

HOLY BOOK FOR DAILY RECITATION

THAPOVANAM

SRI SATHYA SAI SATHCHARITHRA

Sacred Life Story of
Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba

HOLY BOOK FOR DAILY RECITATION

Santrisri

JANDHYALA VENKATESWARA SASTRY
Prashanti Nilayam

English Translation by :
M S B Prasad
JANDHYALA B G TILAK

Sree Puttaparthi Nilayudu
Kaapaadunu ninnun epudu Karunaakarudai
Cheypatii ninnu broachunu
Yepattuna Viduvakunda Yelunu ninnun

- *Baba*

The Lord of Puttaparthi
Protects you always; the Ever-Merciful
Holds your hand in help,
Never leaves you abandoned.

FOREWORD

Here is Another Anna Saheb Dabholkar

The Lord declared that He would incarnate again and again on earth for the resurrection of *Dharma*, the righteousness. The basic nature and purpose of the incarnation of the God *(avathar)* on earth is beyond the comprehension of human mind. It is widely held that incarnations of God are of various types: some are said to be complete incarnations, fulsome incarnations *(poorna avathar)* of the Supreme Lord; some are said to be partial; and some others are mere manifestations of divinity. It is also held by many that incarnations take the form that is appropriate to the times and the context. Many believe that it is only in India the Supreme Lord Himself incarnates; and that in other countries, His messengers, preachers of His divinity, saints, sages, and philosophers, partially imbibing His nature and character are born.

The present incarnation of the Supreme Lord in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the most unique of all incarnations. The fame and glory of the earlier incarnations in India were known only to the Indians. But the whole world is familiar with the magnificence and splendour of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Hence it may be observed that the mankind of the present Kali Yuga is luckier than the earlier generations. We should indeed feel greatly fortunate that we are the contemporaries of the Lord, Who walks amongst us, Who speaks to us, Who loves us more than a mother and above all, Who takes care of us all the time.

The story of the God incarnate, His nature, His life etc., cannot be meaningfully and adequately comprehended by any one. It is beyond human capability to provide a full

account of the Supreme Lord or His incarnate. But an attempt can be made to put together at least some part of the unimaginably vast and infinite glory of the incarnation of the Supreme Lord and enjoy it oneself, and also help others in enjoying it. *Thapovanam: Sri Sathya Sai Satcharithra* is a great attempt of this kind. This is a holy book of daily recitation of the Sacred Life Story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The author has explained the appropriateness of the title, *Thapovanam.*

The author of the Satcharithra, the life-story of SaiBaba of Shirdi was Sri Anna Saheb Dabholkar. The author of the present Satcharithra is Jandhyala Venkateswara Sastry. The penname of Sri Dabholkar was Hemand Pant. The penname of Sri Venkateswara Sastry is Santisri. Sathya Sai Baba of the present days is the reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi. Then, Sri Anna Saheb Dabholkar and Sri Jandhyala Venkateswara Sastry should be one and the same. Sri Dabholkar lived in the close vicinity of Sai Baba of Shirdi for several years; he was lucky to enjoy the compassion of Sai Baba, and with His permission he authored the Satcharithra. In the same way, Sri Venkateswara Sastry is blessed to continue to live in the close proximity of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for several years and to enjoy His darshan (sight), His sparshan (touch), shravanam (listening to Him), and sambhashan (conversation with Him). Sri Venkateswara Sastry is also fortunate to have been an eyewitness to innumerable miracles and marvels of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and to have received His love and compassion in abundance. Thapovanam is a fabulous result of the great efforts he has made with the permission of the Lord. Sri Venkateswara Sastry has indeed done a great service to humanity by providing this unique holy book.

It has been a great tradition in India to recite daily sacred life story of the Lord and His incarnations. It is considered a holy ritual. This Thapovanam is prepared most suitably for daily recitation, like the great epics and the Holy Scriptures, such

as the Ramayana, the MahaBhagavatha, the Bhagavad Githa, the Guru Charithra, and the Satcharithra of Sai Baba of Shirdi. There are eighteen chapters in the Thapovanam, just as in Bhagavad Githa. The recitation of Thapovanam can be started on any Thursday of the week, and following a daily programme for a week, it can be concluded on Wednesday. The recitation can be restarted on the next day, i.e., Thursday. For the pilgrim, every section of the Thapovanam is like an important stage on the banks of the holy river, the Ganges.

गीता गंगोदकम पीत्वा पुनर्जन्म न विद्यथे ।

Gíthā Gangódakam píthvā punarjanma na vidyathé

Song about Gita Mahatmya from Padma Purana by Veda Vyasa
is the saying in Sanskrit. Now it can be said:

साई सत्चरितांमृतम पीत्वा सर्वे यांती परांगतीम ॥

Sai Satcharitāmrutam píthvā sarvé yānti parāngathim

Santisri, the author of Thapovanam is a very distinguished scholar and authored several splendid works. The eminent scholar deserves both congratulations and our gratitude, for he provides us with a distinctive opportunity to enjoy the taste of nectar that flows from the Sacred Life Story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

असित गिरि समंस्यात कज्जलम सिन्धू पात्रे
सुरतरुवर शाखा लेखनी पत्रम ऊर्वी ।
लिखति यदि गृहीत्वा शारदा सर्व कालम
तदपि तव गुणानां ईश पारं न याति ॥

asita giri samam syāt kajjalam sindhu pathré
sura taruvara shākhā lékhaní patram urví |

likhati yadi gruhitvā shāradā sarvakālam
tadapi tava guNānāM Ísha pāram na yāthi ||

This is the Sanskrit sloka hailing the glory of Lord Shiva. Similarly, no one can pen the complete story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Santisri produced in a simple style and in a short form, a magnificent one viz. Thapovanam that provides a glimpse of the most glorious life story of Bhagavan. Sri Sathya Sai Baba, daily recitation of which will usher in peace and prosperity to the whole mankind. After all, though the author of Thapovanam is Santisri, the real author is the Supreme Creator, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Himself.
I feel it a privilege to have been given this opportunity to write the foreword to this great sanctified work and I am grateful to Santisri for the same.

यस्यास्ति सद् ग्रन्त विमर्श भाग्यम्
किन्थस्य सुश्कैस्चपलैर्विनोदै
Yasyāsti sad grantha vimarsha bhāgyam
Kinthasya sushkaischapalairvinódai

1-8-117/2 Chikatipalli. B. Rama Raju
Hyderabad 500 020 National Research Professor

PREFACE

My first darshan of Lord Sathya Sai Bhagavan is the most memorable event in my life. I felt something unique, and rather uniquely divine. His charming beauty, perfect calm and affection attracted me most. In the very first interview He asked me to give lectures daily on the Sri Maha Bhagavatha for an hour in the Mandir in Prasanthi Nilayam. I was taken aback, felt a little nervous and was hesitant to say 'yes.' "Why fear, when I am here," Swami said most affectionately looking at me. Yes, He has been there with me all the time. Otherwise, how could I give lectures on the Maha Bhagavatha, which I never did earlier, except teaching school children? I could deliver lectures for two and half years continuously, that too in the inside Mandir of the holy temple of the Lord, Prasanthi Nilayam and to the great learned devotees. I noted that I was speaking, the Maha Bhagavatha, but I also realised that it was He who was speaking through me. He was the source of my lectures and He was also the subject of my lectures.

As days passed, I slowly realised that He was not an ordinary Swami or even a great sage, but indeed the Lord Himself. I realised beyond doubt that He is Lord Siva, Goddess Sakti, Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, in fact, He is all-in-one. He is Lord of Lords, and the embodiment of all religions and faiths. I further realised that He's my closest friend, my philosopher, guide and everything to me. *Ekam sat .... bahushyam.* His words and actions proved it. The proof is I could prepare His life story.

I have been only an instrument in the divine hands of Swami in penning His Sacred Life Story here for the benefit of the millions of fellow devotees around the world. I have the rare privilege of staying in the very presence of the Lord for the

last 18 years, daily having darshan of the most beautiful form of the Lord, sparshan of the soft and delicate Lotus Feet of the Lord, shravanam of the Lord's melodious and affectionate voice, and also sambhashan with the blissful Lord. He has been with me day and night, and has given me, with immense compassion and boundless love, everything I asked for and even those that I did not ask for. Above all, He gave me health and energy to accomplish this gigantic task. How can I express my gratefulness to the ever-merciful Lord? This book is offered at His Lotus Feet as a very small token of my homage to Him.

****

My heartfelt homage to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my Lord. In His boundless mercy, He is attracting the entire universe with divine love, spreading His happiness and protection to all. No man can adequately describe that tender love and compassion. It is Baba Himself who kindly created in me the urge to write a book about the blessed life of Sri Sathya Sai, so that it could serve countless devotees as a *Parayana Grantham* (i.e. a sacred book for daily recitation, to be read from beginning to end as a spiritual and devotional exercise dedicated to the Lord). That is how this book has taken shape. The Upanishads declare that not even a blade of grass can move without the divine will. That I was made instrumental in writing the life story of Bhagavan is nothing but an indication of His immense love and grace.

Baba is the manifestation of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu, descended on earth from *Vaikunttha*. He Himself declared this in the presence of countless devotees many a time. The word Vishnu means, the Omnipresent. And Puttaparthi is verily that *Vaikunttha* on earth. It is the divine home of Prasanthi (Supreme Peace), destroying sin granting

redemption and conferring eternal bliss. This is visible, even to the naked eye. As Lord Sri Rama gave shape to the city of Ayodhya, Lord Sri Krishna to the city of Dwaraka and Sri Sai Baba to Shirdi, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai with His Divine Will, shaped Puttaparthi and moulded it into a holy place of spiritual glory.

Due to Baba's unfathomable grace, I am blessed with the good fortune of spending my days in His immediate presence in Prasanthi Nilayam. I consider this as my *Punya Phalam*, the reward for spiritual merit earned during many previous lives. There are thousands like me who have settled down in this place and are experiencing the bliss of seeing, touching and conversing with Him. Besides this, thousands more flock here every day. On festive occasions, countless devotees crowd into every inch of the available space. Each one of them can recount several exhilarating episodes of Baba's grace. If one were to set about chronicling their spiritual experiences, it would run into innumerable volumes of immense size. Baba once said: "Let the hill of *Anjana* (collyrium) be mixed in the waters of all the oceans to prepare writing ink. Let quills be fashioned out of the branches of the *Kalpa Vriksha*, the celestial wish-fulfilling tree. Let the whole earth be made into a vast pile of writing paper. And let the Goddess of Learning, Saraswathi herself be the scribe to record, with all that vast material at her disposal, the immense range of Swami's Leelas -- the gamut of His personality, manifestation, sport and divine play. Even so, the task shall for ever remain unfinished." Nevertheless, in all humility I feel that it is not impossible, at least in some measure, to reflect a mountain in a small mirror. I have therefore ventured to do so, i.e., to try to describe within the narrow confines of this book, that Ultimate Reality who is Omnipresent, *Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahma*, the Universal Eternal Principle. In His graciousness too profound for words, Baba blessed my efforts on the auspicious day of

Gurupoornima (20th July 1997), by vouchsafing. His Divine touch to my manuscript.

In all humility, I appeal to every devotee - Invite Lord Sai into the temple of your mind; offer the flower of your heart at His Lotus Feet; let *punya phalam*, the fruit of good deeds and merit acquired dunng past lives be the offering (naivedyam} to Him. Wash His Divine feet with your tears of love and pure joy. And may you attain salvation through *parayanam* of this holy book.

PROCEDURE OF PARAYANAM

In Sanskrit *Pār*' means 'end'. Pārayanam comprises devotional reading of a sacred book from beginning to end. . The contents of the book are so ordered that it can be read through, in daily stages, in seven consecutive days. The reading may be commenced on a Thursday and concluded on the following Wednesday. Every event and incident described here will take the devout reader closer to spiritual realisation. Completion of the reading with devotion and dedication makes one's heart shine pure, bright and crystal clear.

At the commencement, the devotee is to have a bath and wear clean clothes. With a picture or photo or image of Sri Sathya Sai placed in front of him, the devotee should seat himself and humbly pray to the Lord in a relaxed and serene frame of mind, expressing gratitude to Him for having been granted another day of life. He should visualise in mind the scene at Prasanthi Nilayam when Baba moves slowly and graciously among the gathered devotees, nears the decorated throne and takes His seat with befitting dignity. That throne should be deemed by the devotee as the throne of his/her own heart. It is useful to recall, for some moments, the immense benefits conferred on humanity by

Bhagavan Sri Sai. This process will render the devotee's heart tender and receptive.

The moment that one's heart is thus prepared is the most suitable time for commencing the *parayanam*. The image or representation or replicas of Bhagavan's Lotus Feet (*Padukas*) may be worshipped according to the procedure given in the following pages (including the *Ashtothara Satha Namavali*, i.e., the 108 Sacred Names). After completing the reading in seven daily stages from Thursday to Wednesday, worship of Sri Sathya Sai on the following day (Thursday) brings the *parayanam* programme to its conclusion.

Pārayanam of this *Sathcharithra* will earn the grace of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai and also bring about a noticeable elevation in our inner being. That would be the fruit of this spiritual effort. The ritual and disciplined process of reading this book induces in us a glimpse of the inner self and contemplation of the self, which eventually leads us to self-realisation. Simultaneously, we should consciously make up our mind to discard our evil qualities and, at the same time, to add one or two good traits to whatever little stock we already possess. Service to the needy, sacrifice, compassion, patience, love, honesty and sincerity – these are the qualities that deserve to be inculcated assiduously. That, indeed is the worthy offering we could place at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. Our aim should be to reach a stage when we can unreservedly surrender ourselves to Baba. That is the final culmination of human life the spiritual goal, and the ultimate fulfilment. Nothing else excels it; it is the very essence of all the exhortations of the vedas and Upanishads.

*****

This holy book has taken the present form with valuable contributions of many Sai devotees. At home my wife has been a constant source of help and inspiration at every stage

of my life. My children Suman, Tilak, Sekhar and Jyothi have contributed with valuable Inputs at various stages of preparation of this book. My son Dr Suman Babu, the author of the popular book, Sri Krishna-Sri Sathya Sai* edited the Telugu version which formed the basis for its translation into English and other languages. Shri M.S.B. Prasad has put in a lot of time and effort willingly and enthusiastically in translating it into English. My son, Professor Tilak, ably supplemented his efforts. Professor B. Ramaraju, an ardent Sai devotee and a scholar of eminence, has kindly written a nice foreword to the book.

Let Swami's Grace be showered on all!

I dedicate this humble offering to Bhagavan, the Eternal Protector of all:

I lay at your Lotus Feet, my Lord, your Satcharithra
Composed by me as Parayana Grantham;
Be pleased to accept this little flower graciously,
And fulfil the righteous desire of every reader. "

Hail the glory of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

PRASANTH! NILAYAM ***'Santisri'***
Andhra Pradesh *Jandhyala Venkateswara Sastry*

* Sri Krishna-Sri Sathya Sai* A beautiful comparative study of Lord Krishna and

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Part 1

APPROACH TO DIVINITY

PRAYER

Omkāra Bindu Samyuktham,

Nithyam Dhyāyanthi Yóginah,

Kāmadam Mókshadam-Chaiva

Omkārāya Namó Namah.

Shukla-Ambara Dharam Vishnum,

Shashi Varnam Chatur-Bhujam,

Prasanna Vadanam Dhyāyèth,

Sarva Vighnó-pashānthayè.

Siva-Sakthe, Namas-Thubhyam

Varadè, Sai Roopini,

Kavyā -arambham Karishyāmi,

Siddhir Bhavathu Mè Sadā.

Deeksha-Ambara Dharam Sathyam,

Kārunya Rasa Sāgaram,

Sayiswaram-Aham Dhyāyè,

Sarva Mangala Siddhayè

***

Meaning

[Indivisible from the primordial sound of Pranavam, You are ever meditated upon by yogis, You grant every desire, and salvation too, Oh, Omkar, I salute You in deepest humility.

Clad in white robes, ever present everywhere, Shining bright as the moon, with arms four, Oh, remover of every obstacle, and every peril, I meditate on Your benign form.

Oh, Siva-Sakthi, my salutations to You, Bless me. Oh, Mother Sai, As I commence this holy book, May You be ever with me.

Eternal truth, adorned in sacred garments, Ocean of love and mercy, I meditate on Sai-Easwara, Lord Sai Who bestows bliss and happiness on all.]

SAl POOJA- SANKALPAM

(Procedure of Worship of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba)

Apavithraah Pavithróvā Sarva-Avastha-Angathopi Vā,

Yasmareth Pundarikāksham, Sa Bāhya-Abhyantharah Suchih.

Achamya

A spoonful of water is poured into the right palm, which is then taken to the lips and sipped after intoning the first of the following names of Sri Maha Vishnu. A similar sip after the second name and the final sip after the third name follows:

Om Keshavāya Swāhā.
Om Nārāyanāya Swāhā.
Om Mādhavāya Swāhā.

Then, folding both palms in namaskaram, the devotee will utter the following names of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu:

Om Govindāya Namah. Om Vishnavè Namah. Om Madhusoodanāya Namah, Om Thrivikramāya Namah, Om Vāmanāya Namah, Om Shridharāya Namah, Om Hrushikèshāya Namah, Om Padmanābhāya Namah, Om Dāmodarāya Namah, Om Sankarshanāya Namah, Om Vāsudèvāya Namah, Om Pradyumnāya Namah, Om Aniruddhāya Namah, Om Purushothamāya Namah, Om Adhokshajāya Namah, Om Nārasimhāya Namah, Om Achyuthāya Namah, Om Janārdanāya Namah, Om Upendrāya Namah, Om Harayè Namah, Om Shri K.rishnāya Namah.

Uthishthanthu Bhootha Pishāchāh, Ethe Bhoomi Bhārakāh,

Etheshām Avirodhèna, Brahma Karma Samārabhè.

Prānāyām

Om Bhooh, Om Bhuvah, Om Suvah, Om Mahah, Om Janah, Om Thapah, Om Sathyam, Om Thath Savithur Varényam Bhargó Devasya Dhimahi, Dhiyó Yónah Prachódayāth, Om Āpó Jyothi Rasómrutham, Brahma Bhoorbhuvassuvaróm.

Sankalpam

Mama Upāttha Duritha Kshaya Dvārā, Sri Sāyiswaram Uddishya, Sri Sāyiswara Prithyartham, Subhe, Sóbhané, Muhoorthe, Sri Maha Vishnórājnayā, Pravartha Mānasya, Adya Brahmanah, Dvithiya Parārthé, Svetha Varāha Kalpé, Vaivaswatha Manvantharé, Kaliyugé, Prathama Pādé,

[Those outside India may omit the following words within brackets:]

(Jamboo Dvipé, Bharatha Varshé, Bharatha Khandé, Merór-Dakshina Digbhāgé, Sri Sailasya Easanya Pradeshé, Krishna-kaveri-yór, Madhya Desé, Sri Sathya Sai Mandiré, Samastha Devathā Sannidhow, Asmin, Varthamānené, Vyāvahārtka, Chāndra Mānéna Samvathsaré .... āyané ... Rithow ... Māsé ... Pakshé ... Thidhow ... Vāsaré, Subha Nakshathré, Subha Yógé, Subha Karané, Évam Guna Visheshana Vishishttāyām, Shubha Thithow, Asmingrāmé, Sarvéshām, Bhaktha Janānām Cha Sarvópadrava Sānthyartham, Sarvé Jana-AbhiVruddhyartham Mama . . . Góthrasya) Sriman/Srimathi ... (here name of the devotee is to be given), *Nāmadhéyasya, Dharma Pathni saméthasya* (together with wife), *Saha Kutumbasya* (together with family), *Saputhrakasya* (together with children), *Sabāndhavasya* (together with relatives), *Saparivārasya* (together with others). Kshéma, *Sthairya, Dhairya, Vijaya, Abhaya, āyuh-ārógya, Aishvarya,*

Abhivruddhyartham, Dharma, Artha, Kāma, Móksha, Chaturvidha, Phala, Purushārtha, Siddhyartham, Ishta, KāmaArtha, Phala, Siddhyartham, Sri Sathya Sāyiswara Prithyartham, Sri Sathya Sai Devathā Poojām Karishyé.

ARCHANA

Dhyānam (Meditation)	*Om Namah Pranavārthāya* *Mangala Prada Moorthayé,* *Prasanthi Nilayasthāya,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah.*
Āvāhanam (Invitation to the Lord)	*Easwarāmbā Sutha, Sreeman,* *āgachcha Prapithāmah,* *Mahā Vishnó, Māhadévah,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah*
Simhāsanam (Throne is offered)	*Thrisathya, Nithya, Sath, Dharma,* *Santhi Rathna Pradeepakah,* *Simhāsanam, Gruhāna !dam* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah*
Pādyam (Water is offered for washing feet)	*Sathya Deva Parambrahma,* *Sarva Dharma Prabódhaka* *Pādyam Prabhó, Gruhāna !dam,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah*
Arghyam (Water is offered for washing hands)	*Abhra Gangā Jatā Joota,* *Paramānanda Vigraha,* *Gruhāna-Arghyam, Mayā Datttham,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah*
Āchamaneevam (Water is offered for drinking)	*Dévadéva, Jagannātha,* *Préma-Amrutha Rasa-Ambudhi.* *Gruhāna āchamanam Déva,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah.*

Snānam

(Water is offered for bathing)

Nānā Rasa-Amruthaih, Theerthaih,
Samgruhāna Jagatha-Pathé,
Snāpa-ishyāmi Aham Bhakthyā,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah.

Vasthram

(Clothes are offered)

Kāshāya-Ambara Divyānga,
Soundarya Rasa Ranjitha,
Vasthram Sweekuru Lakésha,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah.

Upaveetham

(Sacred thread is offered)

Yajna Bhókthā, Yajna Karthā,
Yajna Priya, Yajushpathi,
Upaveetham Gruhāna !dam,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah.

Gandham

(Sandalwood Paste is offered)

Sri Gandham Seethalam Subhram,
Dehé Thé Lépayami Aham,
Sevanam Sweekuru Sreeman,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah.

Tulasee, Kunda, Mandāraih,
Vakulaih, Satha Pathrakaih,
Poojayāmi Gruhāna !dam,
Sathya Sāyin Namó. Namah.

Pushpam

(Flowers are offered)

Tulasee, Kunda, Mandāraih,
Vakulaih, Satha Pathrakaih,
Poojayāmi Gruhāna !dam,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah.

ASHTÓTHARA SATHA NAMAVALl

(This is the worship of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, invoking His 108 sacred names. At the end of each line ending with Namah, a flower is to be offered at His Lotus Feet.)

1. ***Om Sri Sathya Sai Babāya Namah***
   (My humble Salutations to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba)
2. ***Om Sri Sai Sathya Swaroopāya Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, Who is the embodiment of Truth)
3. ***Om Sri Sai Sathya Dharma Parāyanāya Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, Who solely adheres to Truth and Righteousness)
4. ***Om Sri Sai Varadāya Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, Who is the giver of boons).
5. ***Om Sri Sai Sath Purushāya Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, One who exists eternally)
6. ***Om Sri Sai Sathya Gunāthmane Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, The one who transcends all the three gunas -Sathva, Rajas and Tamas)
7. ***Om Sri Sai Sadhu Vardhanāya Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, Who increases the goodness of the people of the world)
8. ***Om Sri Sai Sadhujana Poshanāya Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, Who looks after and sustains good people)
9. ***Om Sri Sai Sarvajnāya Namah***
   (Salutations to Him, Who is omniscient)

10. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Jana Priyāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him Who is dear to all**)**
11. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Sakthi Moorthay*è *Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the embodiment of all Divine Powers)
12. ***Om Sri Sai Sarvesāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the Lord of all)
13. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Sanga Parithyāgin*è *Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who has given up all attachments)
14. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva-Antharyaamin*è *Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is Omnipresent)
15. ***Om Sri Sai Mahimāthman*è *Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is a great and glorious soul)
16. ***Om Sri Sai Maheswara Swaroopāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the embodiment of Lord Siva)
17. ***Om Sri Sai Parthi Grama Udbhavāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is born in a village called Puttaparthi)
18. ***Om Sri Sai Parthi Kshethra Nivāsine Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who resides at the holy region of Parthi)
19. ***Om Sri Sai Yasah-Kāya Shirdi Vāsine Namah***
*(*Salutations to Him, Who was famous in the previous incarnation as a resident of Shirdi)
20. ***Om Sri Sai Jodi Adipalli Somappāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who indeed is Somappa or the male and the female aspects ofLord Siva-- Siva-Sakti)
21. ***Om Sri Sai Bhāradwāja Rishi Gothrāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is born in the family lineage of the Great Saint Bharadwaja)

22. ***Om Sri Sai Bhaktha Vathsalāya Namah***
(Salutations **to** Him, Who is very affectionate to His devotees)
23. ***Om Sri Sai Apāntharāthmanè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who, as the universal consciousness, dwells in the heart of every being)
24. ***Om Sri Sai Avathara Moorthayè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the embodiment of all Incarnations)
25. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Bhaya Nivārinè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who removes all fears)
26. ***Om Sri Sai āpasthamba Soothrāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is born in the line of Brahmarshi Apastamba)
27. ***Om Sri Sai Abhaya Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who gives Security to all)
28. ***Om Sri Sai Ratnākara Vamshaodbhavāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is born in the Dynasty of Ratnakara)
29. ***Om Sri Sai Shirdi Sai Abheda Sakthiavathārāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Whose glory is not different from that of the Shirdi Avathar)
30. **O*m Sri Sai Sankarāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is Lord Sankara's holiness and auspiciousness)
31. ***Om Sri Sai Shirdi Sai Moorthaye Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the Incarnation of Shirdi Sai)
32. ***Om Sri Sai Dwārakā Māyi Vāsinè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the resident of Dwaraka Mayi)

33. ***Om Sri Sai Chithrāvathi Thata Puttaparthi Vihārine Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who lives in Puttaparthi on the banks of the river Chithravathi)
34. ***Om Sri Sai Sakthi Pradāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who bestows strength)
35. ***Om Sri Sai Saranāgatha Thrānāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him**,** Who saves the one who seeks refuge in Him)
36. ***Om Sri Sai ānandāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who blissful)
37. ***Om Sri Sai ānandadāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who grants bliss)
38. ***Om Sri Sai ārtha Thrāna Parāyanāya*** **Namah**
    (Salutations to Him, Who is devoted solely in serving those in distress)
39. ***Om Sri Sai Anātha Nāthāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who is the guardian or Lord of the destitutes)
40. ***Om Sri Sai Asahāya Sahāyāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who is the helper of the helpless)
41. ***Om Sri Sai Loka Bāndhavāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him Who is the kith and kin of the whole world)
42. ***Om Sri Sai Loka Rakshā Parāyanāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who is solely devoted in protecting the whole world)
43. ***Om Sri Sai Loka Nāthāya Namah***
    (Salutations to Him, Who is the beloved Lord of the whole mankind)

44. ***Om Sri Sai Dina Jana Poshanāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who nourishes and sustains the poor and the destitues)
45. ***Om Sri Sai Moorthi Thraya Swaroopāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the incarnation of the holy Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara)
46. ***Om Sri Sai Mukthi Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who confers liberation from ignorance, misery and death)
47. ***Om Sri Sai Kalusha Vidhoorāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who removes the faults and blemishes in all of us)
48. ***Om Sri Sai Karuna-Akarāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is compassionate)
49. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva-Adhārāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the support of all)
50. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva-Hridayavasinè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who resides in the heart of everyone)
51. ***Om Sri Sai Puny a Phala Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the bestower of fruits of merit)
52. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Pāpa Kshaya Karāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him. Who is the destroyer of all the sins)
53. ***Om Sri Sai Sarvaa Roga Nivārinè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who removes all the diseases)
54. ***Om* Sri *Sai Sarva Bādhā Harāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who takes away all the sufferings)
55. ***Om Sri Sai Anantha Nutha Karthrune Namah***
(Salutations to Him, The one who is the Creator and who is praised endlessly)

56. ***Om Sri Sai ādi Purushrya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the primeval Purusha, the Creator Himself)
57. ***Om Sri Sai ādi Sakthaye Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the primeval Cosmic energy -- the Sakti aspect of the Creator)
58. ***Om Sri Sai Apuroopa Sakthinè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who has delightful and wonderful powers)
59. ***Om Sri Sai Avyaktha Roopin Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the form of the unmanifested)
60. ***Om Sri Sai Kāma Krodha Dhwamsinè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who destroys desire and anger)
61. ***Om Sri Sai Kanaka-Ambara Dharinè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who wears a Golden Coloured Robe)
62. ***Om Sri Sai Adbhutha Charyāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Whose deeds are amazing)
63. ***Om Sri Sat āpad-bāndhavāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who, in our calamities, comes to our help like a close relative)
64. ***Om Sri Sai Premāthmanè Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Whose inner reality is only Love)
65. ***Om Sri Sai Prema Moorthaye Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the embodiment of Love)
66. ***Om Sri Sai Prema Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who bestows love on all)
67. ***Om Sri Sai Priyāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who endears himself to all)

68. ***Om Sri Sai Bhaktha Priyāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the beloved Lord of all devotees)
69. ***Om Sri Sai Bhaktha Mandārāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who like the Divine Mandara Tree in Heavens described in the *Purānās* fulfills our sacred desires)
70. ***Om Sri Sai Bhaktha Jana Hrudaya Vihārāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who sports and revels in the hearts of devotees)
71. ***Om Sri Sai Bhaktha Jana Hrudaya-Alayāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who makes the heart of the devotees a sacred abode for Himself)
72. ***Om Sri Sai Bhaktha Parādhināya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is dependent on the devotees)
73. ***Om Sri Sai Bhakthi Jnāna Pradipāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who kindles wisdom and devotion in us)
74. ***Om Sri Sai Bhakthi Jnāna Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who confers wisdom and devotion on us)
75. ***Om Sri Sai Sujnāna Marga Darsakāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who shows the path of attaining right knowledge)
76. ***Om Sri Sai Jnāna Swaroopāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is wisdom personified)
77. ***Om Sri Sai Githā Bodhakāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the Teacher of the Githa)
78. ***Om Sri Sai Jnāna Siddhi Dāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who grants the achievement of wisdom)

79. ***Om Sri Sai Sundara Roopāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who has a charming form)
80. ***Om Sri Sai Punya Purushāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the embodiment of Purity
81. ***Om Sri Sai Phala Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who dispenses fruits of merit acquired by good deeds or acts)
82. ***Om Sri Sai Purushothamāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the Supreme person)
83. ***Om Sri Sai Purāna Purushāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the most ancient Supreme person)
84. ***Om Sri Sai Athithāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him Whose glory is transcendant)
85. ***Om Sri Sai Kāla-Athithāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who transcends the limits of time*)*
86. ***Om Sri Sai Siddhi Roopāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the embodiment of all accomplishments)
87. ***Om Sri Sai Siddha Sankalpāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Whose will is immediately effective)
88. ***Om Sri Sai ārogya Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who grants us good health)
89. ***Om Sri Sai Anna Vasthra Dāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who provides us with food and clothing)
90. ***Om Sri Sai Samsāra Duhkha Kshaya Karāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who destroys the sufferings of this world)
91. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva-Abhishta Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who fulfils all our good desires and aspirations)

92. ***Om Sri Kalyāna Gunāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him. Whose virtues are beneficial)
93. ***Om Sri Sai Karma Dhwamsine Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who destroys our Karmas to give us liberation from retribution in this life)
94. ***Om Sri Sai Sādhu Mānasa Shóbhithāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who shines in the heart of good people)
95. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Matha Sammathāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who accepts all faiths as equally true)
96. ***Om Sri Sai Sādhu Mānasa Parishodhakāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the cleanser of the minds of the aspirants)
97. ***Om Sri Sai Sādhaka-Anugraha Vata-Vriksha Prathishthāpakāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him. Who has planted the banyan tree as a boon to the Sadhakas)
98. ***Om Sri Sai Sakala Samshaya Harāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who removes all doubts in us and strengthens our faith)
99. ***Om Sri Sai Sakala Tathwa Bódhakāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who gives the essence of all knowledge)
100. ***Om Sri Sai Yógiswarāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the Lord of all Yogis)
101. ***Om Sri Sai Yógindra Vandithāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is revered by all the masters of Yoga)
102. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Mangala Karāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who grants all auspiciousness and prosperity)

103. ***Om Sri Sai Sarva Siddhi Pradāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who grants all accomplishments and skill)

104. ***Om Sri Sai āpannivārine Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who removes calamities)

105. ***Om Sri Sai ārthi Harāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who takes away physical and mental pains)

106. ***Om Sri Sai Santha Moorthaye Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is the personification of peace)

107. ***Om Sri Sai Sulabha Prasannāya Namah***
(Salutations to Him, Who is easy to be pleased)

108. ***Om Sri Sai Bhagavan Sri Sathya Bābāya Namah***
(My humble salutations to Lord Sri Sathya Sai Baba)

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Dhoopam (lighted joss-sticks are shown)	*Sugandha-Agaru Samyukthah,* *Dhoopoyam Prathigruhyathām,* *āghréya Sarva Lokésha,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah*
Deepam (Lighted lamp is shown *)*	*Jyothishām Pathayé Thubhyam,* *Sai Rāmāya Vishnavé,* *Gruhāna Deepam Math-Datham,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah*
Naivedyam (food offering Is made)	*Parama-Annam Divyam Navyam,* *Shat-Rasopétha Manjulam* *Gruhāna Krupayā Déva,* *Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah*

Thamboolam

(Betel leaves are offered)

Thamāla Pama Sougandhyam,
Poogee Phala Sudhānvitham,
Thāmboolam Gruhyathām Déva,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah

Neerajanam

(Lighted camphor Is shown)

Ānanda Ghana Karpobram,
Neerājanar" Idam Prabho,
Gruhāna Idam Mayā Datham,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah

Manthra Pushpam

(Flowers are offered)

Manthra-Ardham Mahimopétham,
Suvarnam Jnona Dayakam,
Manthra Pushpam Gruhona Idam,
Sathya Sāyin Namó Namah

Namaskāram
(Salutations are offered)

PrāpthohamPrāptha Karmóham,
Prāptha-Athmā, Prāptha Sambhavah,
Thrāhi Mom Krupayā Déva,
Sathya Sayin Nama Namah

Arathi

(Lighted camphor to be offered)

***

SAI EASWARA ASHTAKAM

Eshwārombā Sutham Sathyam Nithya Mangalakārinam
Venkavadhootha Sampritham Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Thulasi Dala Sankāsam Yogi Manasa Poojitham Saraya
Mānava Sandésam Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Hari Nila Jatā Jootam Poorna Chandra Nibhāmanam Bhakta
Loka Chidābhāsam Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Ārtha thrāna Vrathā dhāram Vyóma késa Virājitham Yasah
Chandra Prabhā Vyómam Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Rathnakara Samudbhootham Kāshāyāmbara Dhārinam
Ānāda kósa Sanchāram Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Prémāmrutha Payórāsim Viswa Kalyana Kārinam Sānthi
Sathya Samāhāram Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Prashānti Nilayāvāsam Bāla Bhāskara Sannibham Āsritha
.Jana Mandāram Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Viswa V*idyālaya Vāaptham Nigamāgama Sévitham Sathyam*
Sivam cha Soundaryam Vandé Sai Jagat Gurum

Sai Es*wara Ashtakam Punyam Nithyam Mansiyah pattheth*
Janmānthara *Krutham Pāpam Vinasyathi na Samsayah*

SRI SAI ASHTAKSHARI MANTHRAM

Om Shri Sāyishāya Namah

Omkāra rōpāya, Shankā vidhōrāya
Paraméshwarāya, Thubhyam Namósthu
Shri Rāmachandrāya, Shritajana kshémāya
Paramārthha dāya, Thubhyam Namósthu
Sāyujya Varadhāya, Sat Chidhānandhāya
Para Dhaivathāya, Thubhyam Namósthu
Eashwari Puthrāya, Vishwa Prakāshāya
Parthishwarāya, Thubhyam Namósthu

Shāradhā Manónāthhāya, Jaya karāya
Yajna Purushāya, Bhayadha Bhavānthakāya
Nava Kishórāya, Mandhara Naga dhharāya ~~
Mahath Ananthāya, Thubhyam Namó Namósthu

Part II

DIVINE MIRACLES

A SUBMISSION

The cosmos is full of Sai: this is the Sai Era. This Age ***(Kali Yuga)*** [1] belongs to Sai. Sri Sathya Sai Baba is undoubtedly the God incarnate. The Glory of this personification of Love (Prema) originated in Puttaparthi. Gradually, it reached 'Dharmavaram' (Dharma means righteousness). then on to 'Ananthapuram' (Anantha means boundless) and spread onwards over hills and valleys, fields, rivers and deserts. In no time, it crossed the seas and oceans and engulfed the entire world. As a consequence, the tiny and inconspicuous village of Puttaparthi, hidden amongst hills all around, has acquired great name and fame, and transformed itself into the abode of divinity and place of pilgrimage.

Apart from India, the ancient land of Yoga and spirituality, several foreign countries and continents, namely - Sri Lanka. Africa, Australia, USA, South America, Greece, New Zealand, Iceland, Russia, France, Japan, Switzerland, Iran and China, bask in the splendid effulgence of Sri Sathya Sai's divinity (Divine Sakthi). Bhagavan Sai's soothing touch is personally experienced by every devotee calling on Him - wherever the call comes from whatever be the name by which the devotee

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[1] ***According to Hindu cosmogony, time is divided into four Yugas: Kritha, Thretha, Dwapara and Kali. The total of these four is 4.3 million years, which is called a Mahayuga. The four Yugas occur in cycles, one Mahayuga followed by the next. The current Yuga is Kali.***

addresses Him, and even if the devotee is too severely distressed to call on Him in spoken words. Just as little children run to their mother's warm embrace, people eagerly flock to have a glimpse of the Universal Mother at Puttaparthi.

Baba is the personification of Supreme Divinity. When people are fortunate enough to reach His presence they find Him in the image of their favourite deity -- to some He appears as Lord Sri Rama, to others as Lord Sri Krishna (Syama Sundara), as Lord Sri Maha Vishnu, as Lord Ganapathi, as Sri Subrahmanya Swamy, as Lord Parama Siva, as Goddess Durga Bhavani, as Sri Sai of Shirdi, as Sri Dattatreya, as the Buddha, as Jesus Christ, and so on. Every one experiences the divine touch according to one's own personal preference. In this manner, Baba demonstrates that He transcends the entire pantheon of divine forms.

It is well known among Baba's devotees that the universal cycle of Srishti (creation), Sthithi (maintenance) and Layam (ultimate merger) lies entirely within His control. He once told a devotee: " 'Bha I stands for Srishti 'Ga for Sthithi and 'Va for Layam. He who holds these three ultimate powers (Sakthis) is Bhagavan. This indeed is the subtle reality of My person."

Sathya Sai is truly Bhagavan embodying His boundless powers and encompassing the entire universe. He has incarnated Himself in human form amongst us. We can never comprehend Swami's divinity except by taking recourse to the paths of devotion (Bhakthi) devout action (Karma) and spiritual comprehension (Jnān). To facilitate

individual progress on these spiritual paths, Swami Himself has been openly explaining the elements of His divinity. On one such occasion Baba said, "It is not for My sake but for your sake that I am moving amidst you, speaking with you, eating with you and behaving so as to be within your comprehension. I am freely mixing with you just like any one of you, so that I gain your confidence and trust, love and willing obedience, so as to lead you towards divinity. My objective is to infuse in you the virtue of spiritual inquisitiveness. To begin with, try to understand the inner reality of your being; thereafter advance to the stage of realization of the Supreme Truth. I am the underlying force of the entire cosmos. I am the supreme cause of everything. I am the realised (Jnāni), I am also the realisation (Jnān) and I am the realisable (Jneya)."

Baba has descended on the earth to lead humanity towards spiritualism through love. All His efforts are directed to this mission. He is immensely patient, forbearing and compassionate. He declared: "No other incarnation ever before behaved as I do. Never before had any avathar gone and moved among the common folk of the remotest village, awakened people immersed in deep slumber, inspired the inactive into energetic activity, succoured the afflicted, blessed millions of people, and led them on the glorious avenue of Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness), Santhi (peace) and Prema (love). I am the ocean; you are the rivers and waves. You, in essence, are I; and I am you! You will be able to realise this truth when you finally attain the ultimate goal."

“How long would you remain trapped in this mire? Develop wings and soar", exhorts Baba. One wing is, constantly remembering and repeatedly chanting God's Name (nama smaran); the other is, serving the afflicted. By these means, one can shed the burden of retribution for the sins of previous lives and attain absolute purity untouched by dross and taint. That is Baba's assurance.

"I am aware of every hardship and happiness of each one of you for the simple reason that I reside in each one of you. This Sai Sakthi (energy) is flowing through each individual being, just like electricity in every bulb. In every heart I shine. I am the life force in every heart," declared Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the presence of hundreds of thousands of devotees gathered in the Vallabh Bhai Patel Stadium in Mumbai. To those who totally repose faith in Him, Baba responds in full measure; He extends protection by His constant presence in their homes, behind them, by their side, and within sight all the time.

This book is the life story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It recounts some of the glorious events of His divine life. It is a sacred book that reflects in a small way the immense and boundless spirituality of Bhagavan. I request every devotee to utilise this book for devotional reading (parayanam) and thereby earn the grace and love of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai.

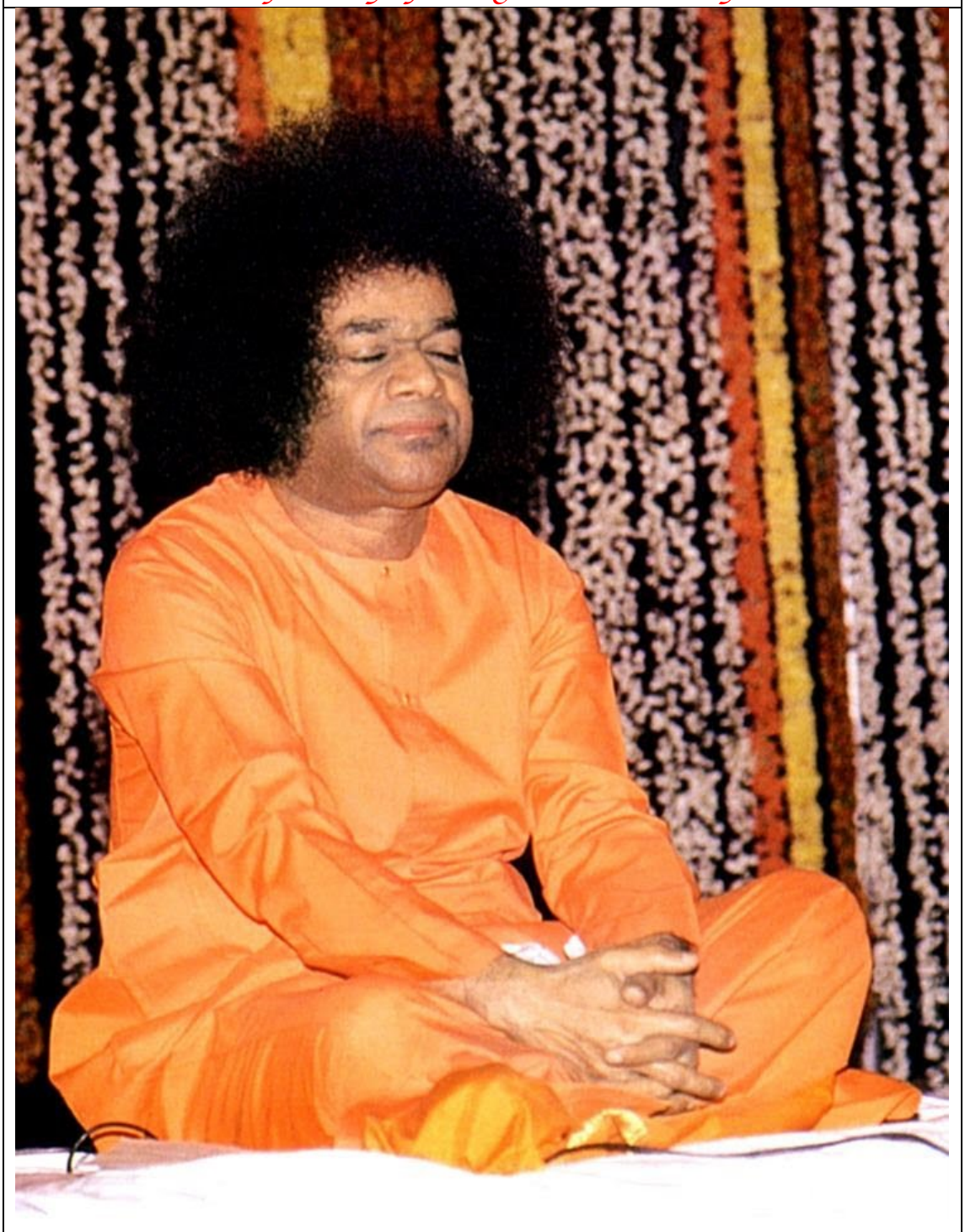
It was Bhagavan Himself who blessed me With inspiration to write this book. It was He who made me write it, it was He who gave shape to it. I was only incidental, a mere instrument in His divine hands. In this manner, Swami graciously enabled me to successfully accomplish the

profound task of unveiling and spreading the glory of the Sai Baba Avathar. I consider that I am exceptionally fortunate in being granted this privilege.

Every single incident described in these pages is powerful enough to light the lamp of love and to drive away the darkness of ignorance. Accordingly, I sincerely believe that this book will go a long way in helping devotees to achieve self-realisation. I humbly pray at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan to bless and protect all humanity.

Thapovanam

The Sacred Life Story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



HOLY BOOK FOR DAILY RECITATION

DAY 1 : THURSDAY

CHAPTER 1 - THAPOVANAM

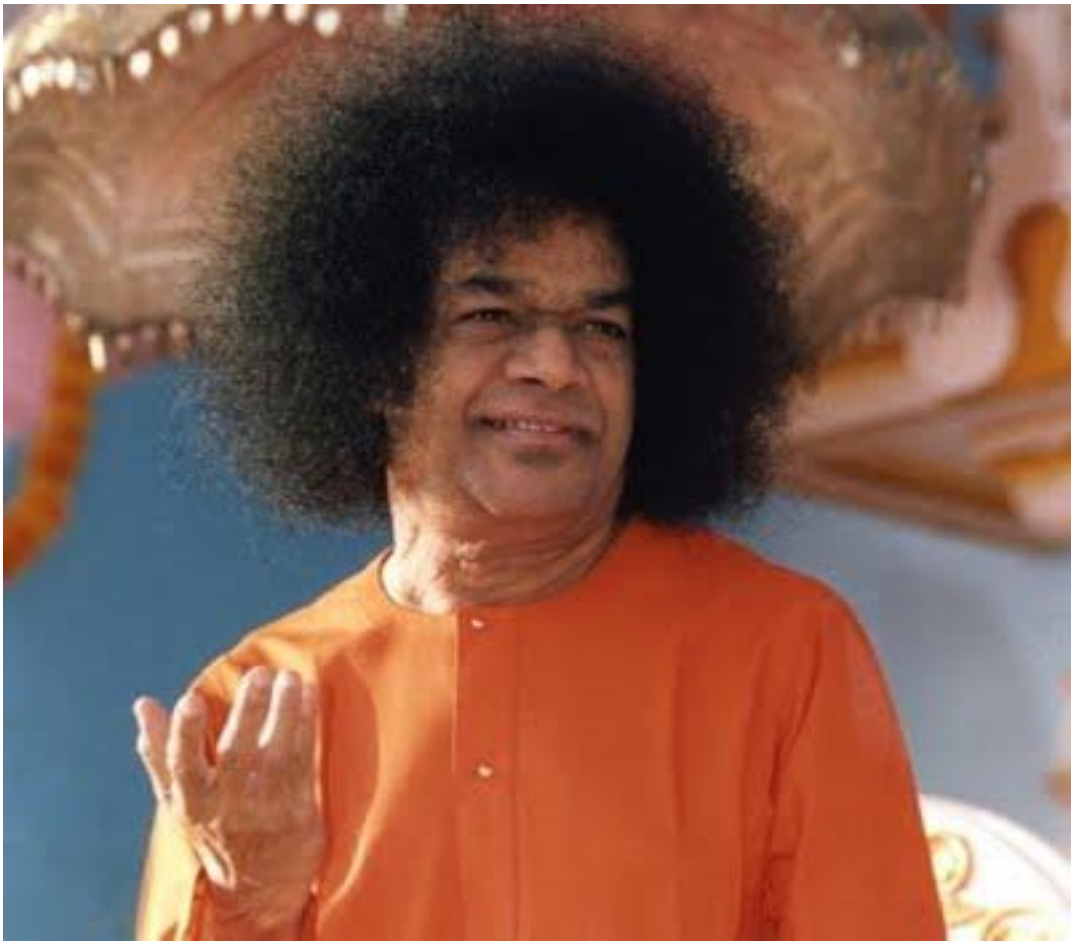
You cannot see Me, but I am the light you see by. You cannot hear Me, but I am the sound you hear by. You cannot know Me, but I am the truth you live by. - Baba

ENTERING THE THAPOVANAM

Before I commence the *parayanam* of this book, Thapovanam, I offer my most humble salutations to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai, the Lord of the Universe, the protector of the afflicted and the encapsulation of Sath-Chith-Ananda Parabrahma (the Universal Supreme Reality).

There stands a banyan tree on the mountain path leading from Prashanti Nilayam to the University. It is no ordinary tree. It is the Dhyana Vriksham, the Tree of Meditation; and it is the Thapo Vriksham, the Tree of Spiritual Austerities. On 29 June 1959, (ashadha Poornima, i.e., the full moon day of ashadha month) Bhagavan materialised a thick copper plate of 15" x 10" inscribed with alphabetical letters of great spiritual potency (Beeja Aksharas). He deposited it in the earth at a spot specially chosen on the hill behind Prashanti Nilayam, and over it planted this banyan tree. On that sacred occasion, He addressed devotees and declared: "This tree is the Bodhi Tree, under which Gautama Buddha sat, meditated and received spiritual illumination. This is the Tree of Enlightenment (Jnan). Lord Krishna is known as Vata Pathra Sayi (reposing on a banyan leaf), because during the period

of Pralaya (ultimate merger of all creation in the Infinite), he assumed the microcosmic form of Bala Krishna (Krishna, the Baby) and reposed on a banyan leaf. This is the tree referred to by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. If aspirants (Sadhakas) meditate and undertake spiritual austerities here, they will attain fulfillment of their desires, success in



their efforts, and control of senses and steadiness of mind." With reference to planting of this tree, one of the lines in the Ashtothara Satha Namavali reads: *"Sadhaka-Anugraha Vata-Vriksha Prathishthapakaya Namah."*

The banyan lives forever. It is immortal (Amara Vriksham). Growing into a mighty tree by itself, it drops innumerable root-like extensions from its branches to the earth, which in turn becomes fresh roots and extends the tree in all

directions. The process goes on and on, providing an ever-increasing area of cool shade and shelter to people. I do not hesitate to assert that Bhagavan is likewise providing ever-increasing zone of protection and peace for the benefit of the entire humanity. This Thapo Vriksham is certainly Kalpa Vriksham (wish-fulfilling celestial tree), identical with Bhagavan. Those who are in intense distress and are tired with the ups and downs of life, those who are on spiritual quest, those who ardently desire something pure, those who are progressing on the path of spiritual enlightenment - all such persons gather at the feet of Sri Sathya Sai and attain tranquility, supreme peace and equanimity. Truly is Baba Himself a Thapo Vriksham where all spiritual austerities achieve fulfillment! Prashanti Nilayam is verily the Thapovanam.

Physical construction of the complex of Prashanti Nilayam had not yet commenced then. One day, Bhagavan was standing on the rocky ground there. Out of His mouth emerged prophetic words: "Before long this area is going to be transformed into a Shirdi, a Tirupathi and a Varanasi. Thousands of yogis, sanyasis and seekers of truth and divine grace will rush to this place for spiritual peace and salvation. From this spot will originate the universal programme of revival of Sanathana Dharma (the Eternal Faith of Righteousness). Hundreds of thousands of people from all corners of the world will visit this place eagerly searching for Me. At the far fringes of such crowds will stand many more craning their necks to catch at least a fleeting flash of a tiny bit of this ochre robe I wear, they will thank their stars and feel that the purpose of their lives has been fulfilled."

Within a short time after Swami made this announcement,

Prashanti Nilayam took shape. The Prashanti Mandir with its distinctive style and beauty, the temple tower, numerous multi-storeyed buildings providing accommodation to devotees, the exquisite Poorna Chandra Auditorium and the Sai Kulwant Hall - all sprang into existence. Very soon, Prashanti Nilayam was designated a township.

In the words of Baba, "This is a place where every human being can experience spiritual peace par excellence. It is a temple, and at the same time, a church, and a synagogue - to each according to his or her preference. Everyone is entitled to drink deep at the unlimited and bountiful fountain of love of God. God has incarnated here in human form. Here, everyone can reach the highest levels of spiritual attainment. My goal is to convert every human heart into a Prashanti Nilayam. It is only for achieving this, that the present Avathar of Mine has materialised on earth."

Every devotee is free to avail themselves of these benign surroundings to meditate to his heart's content, irrespective of the deity he worships. He will suffer no disturbance. Nowhere else in the world could such a facility be found. That is why this place is regarded as Universal Garden of Meditation (Viswa Thapovanam). Fulfillment of spiritual austerities is attained very much faster here. The Formless Supreme Reality (Nirakara Parabrahma) is seen here, in flesh and blood, in human form. Just sit in meditation, God Himself comes to you; He stands right in front of you; He smiles gently at you; He speaks endearingly, re-assuringly, to you; He touches you softly; He blesses you; He showers Divine Bliss on every atom of your being!

It is only on the strength of good deeds and good fortune

accumulated during numerous past lives that one is privileged to enter this Thapovanam. That is why Bhagavan says "

"Without My Will, nobody can set foot on the soil of Puttaparthi. No one can do so by chance or by accident." This is literally true.

Hundreds and thousands of visitors throng to Puttaparthi seeking relief from restlessness of mind. They come from far and near, from every continent and country; they belong to different races and religions; and they speak numerous languages. They go back after experiencing indescribable bliss and peace. They are receiving due reward for the merit they have accumulated during previous lives through spiritual sadhana. No less than personal interaction with God Himself is their supreme reward at Puttaparthi. They rejoice in the blessings Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai showers on them. Those who never before practiced any spiritual austerities whatsoever get inspired on seeing Bhagavan and begin to do so. This is evident even to a casual observer.

Because of many such reasons, this book has been named Thapovanam, the garden of meditation. And the ever-merciful Bhagavan has blessed this humble effort.

PRANAVAM

The pilgrimage centre of Puttaparthi is surrounded by beautiful hills, which provide a sylvan, pleasant and peaceful environment. One feels as if great sages and rishis are performing meditation there. Behold, it is now the Brahma Muhoortham (the pre-dawn period). Cool and refreshing breezes are wafting. Birds are up and making soft chirping

sounds. In the Prashanti Nilayam precincts, around 4-40am, the gong strikes 12 times. That sets in motion the day's activities in the divine court. Devotees quietly move into the forecourt and take their seats in perfect rows. At 4-50am, the gong strikes five times. Those who are sitting in the forecourt smoothly move into the Hall. After the Bhajan Hall is full, lights are switched off and the doors are closed.

It is now exactly 5am. A bell is rung. The gathered devotees begin rhythmically intoning the Omkar (utterance of Om), the Universal Sound, in perfect unison and measured tone. Omkar is credited with the power of attuning the individual Atma (Soul) with the Param- Athma (Supreme Principle). The great rishis of yore gifted Omkar to the world as Maha Manthra (the sublime, most potent manthra). It is said, "Om Ithi Eka-Aksharam Brahma" (This single syllabled word 'Om' is itself the Divine Principle). It comprises three sounds - A, U and M: AUM. Constant and sustained incantation (Japam)

of Pranavam leads to obliteration of mind and experience of supreme bliss.

Regarding the profound significance of Om (AUM), Baba has this to say : "There is only one word which is all-pervasive throughout the universe. That is Omkar; that is, Pranavam. All creation is imbued with Pranavam. The mountain brooks sing Pranavam. The oceans sing Pravanam. Why, even the process of inhalation and exhalation is nothing but Pravanam. Those who perform manual labour, like palanquin-bearing or lifting weights or washing clothes, ease their strain and soothe their nerves by rhythmically intoning Pranavam. That being the case, if one intones Pranavam, with full understanding of its meaning and significance, and with devotion, one is sure to expiate all burden of accumulated sin and attain release from the cycle of births and deaths."

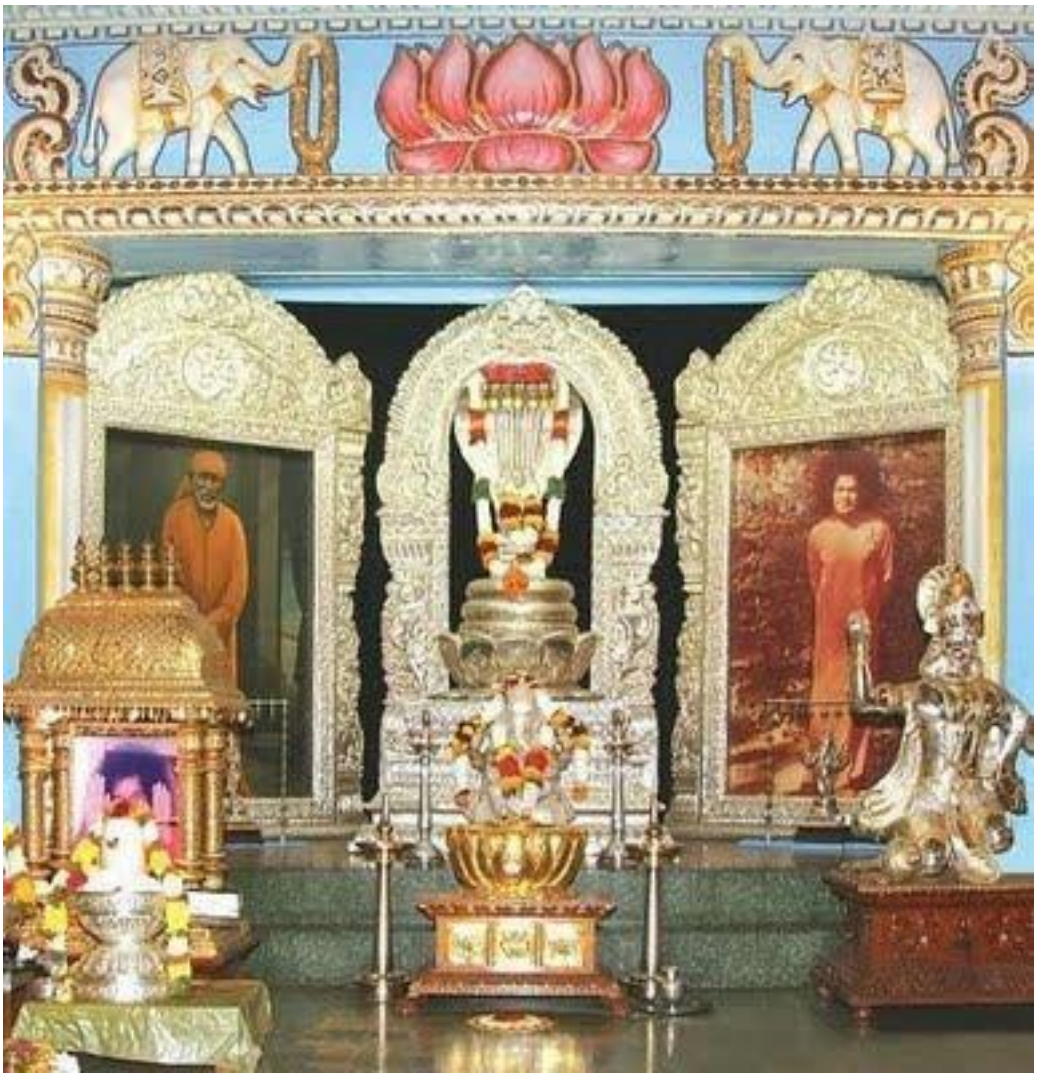
Just as a long train of coaches moves forward when it is linked to a railway engine, all manthras become potent and fruitful when they are prefixed with Pranavam. Even if just Pranavam alone is intoned, it amounts to having intoned the essence of all the Vedas.

Such a potent and all-powerful provider of supreme-bliss, the Omkar, now echoes 21 times in Prashanti Nilayam. The spiritual vibrations thus generated are carried on the wings of the early morning waves of breeze creating spiritual pulsations throughout the universe.

Next follows the Suprabatham (the ceremonial wake-up of the Lord). The verses are in Sanskrit, the music is rhythmical and specially attuned to the early morning environment.

Generally lady devotees sitting in the mandir recite the Sanskrit stanzas with devotion and love.

SUPRABATHAM



Easwaramba Suthah Sreeman, Poorva Sandhya Pravarthathe, Utthishtha Sathya Sayeesa, Karthavyam Daivam-ahnikam.

(Oh, son of Easwaramba! Oh, resplendent majestic One! The dawn is breaking in the East. The daily tasks of Divinity, which you have undertaken, have to be accomplished therefore, awake O Lord Sathya Sai!)

Utthishthoatthishtha Partheesha Utthishtha Jagathee Pathe Utthishtha Karuna-poorna, Loka Mangala Siddhaye.

(Awake, Awake, Oh Lord of Parthi (Puttaparthi where He has manifested Himself and from where His splendour radiates over the entire World). Awake, Oh Lord of Compassion, so that the World may attain fortune (mangala)).

Chithravathee Thata Vishala Susantha Soudhe,
Thishtthanthi Sevaka Janah Thava- Darsanartham.
Adithya Kanthih-Anubhathi Samastha Lokan,
Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan Thava Suprabatham.

(In the vast mansion so full of peace (Prashanti Nilayam), on the banks of the river Chithravathi, those anxious to serve Thee are waiting for Thy Darshan. The radiance of the Sun is spreading, illumining all the worlds. Oh, Bhagavan Sathya Sai, we pray for a glorious daybreak, blessed by Thy wakefulness.)

Thvannama Keerthana Rathah, Thava Divya Nama Gayanthi, Bhakthi Rasa Pana Prahrishta Chiththah,
Dathum Krupa-Sahitha Darsanam-ashu thebhyah,
Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan Thava Suprabatham.
(Persons who are engaged in singing aloud Thy Name and who are happy when they do so because then, they taste the nectar of devotion, have come, and may Thy benign darshan shower Thy grace on them. We pray for a glorious daybreak, blessed by Thy wakefulness.)

Adaya Divya Kusumani Manoharani,
Shree Pada Poojana Vidhim Bhavad-Anghrimoole

Kartum Maha-Utsukathaya, Pravishanthi Bhakthah,
Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan Thava Suprabhatham.

(Bringing holy flowers of captivating colours and fragrance, for worshipping Thy Feet in the form prescribed by the scriptures, Thy devotees are coming in with great yearning and enthusiasm. We pray for a glorious daybreak, blessed by Thy wakefulness.)

Desantharagatha Budhah Thava Divya Moorthim,
Sandarshana-Abhirathi Sam-Yutha Chitha Vruthya,
Vedoktha Manthra Patthanena Lasanthyajasram,
Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan Thava Suprabatham

(Learned persons from other countries, moved by the yearning to have Thy Darshan, have come; they are having great delight in reciting constantly the manthras of the Vedas. We pray for a glorious daybreak, blessed by Thy wakefulness.)

Shruthva Thava-Adbhutha Charithram Akhanda Keerthim
Vyapthaam Diganthara Vishala Dharathale-Asmin,
Jigy~aasu Lokam-Upathishttathi Chashrame-Asmin,
Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan Thava Suprabhatham

(Hearing Thy marvelous story and Thy Fame that has reached the farthest horizons, earnest seekers of Reality have come to this place and are waiting for You. We pray for a glorious daybreak, blessed by Thy wakefulness.)

Seetha Sathee Sama Visuddha Hrid-Ambujathah,
Bahu-Angana Kara-Gruheetha Supushpa-Harah,
Sthunvanthi divya nuthibhih, phani-bhooshanam thvam
Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan Thava Suprabhatham

(Women devotees in purity equal to Goddess Seetha, and with hearts like lotuses, whose petals are unattached to the world in which they live but are drawn to the Sun, viz, God, are singing Thy Glory through holy hymns, holding excellent flower garlands in their hands. We pray for a glorious Daybreak, blessed by Thy wakefulness.)

Suprabhatham-Idam Punyam, Ye' Patthanthi Dine Dine,
The Vishanthi Param-Dhama, gyaana Vigyaana Sobhithah.
Mangalam Guru Devaaya, Mangalam gyaana Dayine,
Mangalam Parthi vasaya, Mangalam Sathya Sayine.

(Whoever daily recites this Wakening Hymn will attain the Highest Abode, resplendent with the supreme Intelligence as well as the supreme Wisdom. May the Divine Guru be auspicious to us; may the Bestower of Wisdom be auspicious to us; may the Lord who manifested in Parthi be auspicious to us; may Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba be auspicious to us.

Spiritually speaking, Suprabhatham is an appeal to Him to 'awake' to the devotee's yearning. It is an appeal also to one's own consciousness to wake up to the truth of His being one's own innermost reality.

It may sound odd that human beings sing the awakening up song and bid good morning to Bhagavan who is ever awake and ever alert, and is the supreme witness to everything in the universe. Where is the need for waking up the One who knows no 'sleep' whatsoever and is ever wakeful? Then, what is all this Suprabhatham for, and for whom? The real purpose behind this musical exercise is to arouse ability to discriminate (vivek) and alertness in all of us, who have woken up from the bosom of sleep that holds us in its

embrace like a mother! The inner meaning of Suprabhatham is to remind ourselves, "God resides within everyone's heart", and also to trim and nurture the flame of awareness (Jnana-Agni) so that it may burn brighter than ever.

Here is a revealing incident. It was the holy night of Siva Rathri (the night marking the birth of Lord Siva in the form of Lingam). A scholar named Sri Deepala Pichchayya Sastry was sitting among devotees doing Bhajan in Prashanti Nilayam. Suddenly he had a strange thought : "I would like to see the wonderful grace and beauty of Bhagavan Sai Baba when He is asleep." At about 11pm that very night Swami summoned Sastry into the Interview Room and began talking to him. Sastry did not notice the passage of time. It was more than an hour. He felt drowsy and could not hold back his yawns any more. Swami then asked him, "Sastry, you wished to see Me asleep but you yourself are dozing?" Sastry suddenly sprang to wakefulness and wondered how Swami knew his innermost thought that had crossed his mind a little while ago. Baba assumed a tone of serenity and seriousness and said, "Sastry, if I were to sleep, would you be waking up again?" Sastry was startled. God is perpetually wakeful and eternally active. We should never overlook this simple truth.

NAGARA SANKEERTHAN

After Suprabhatham, it is now time for Nagara Sankeerthan. It comprises an activity in which groups of devotees go around the streets singing devotional songs. They sing with ardent devotion and dedication and the rhythmic music, often accompanied by simple musical instruments, inspires holy thoughts not only among the singers, but also others. In

the early hours of the day, when birds are chirping their own musical sounds, when cool and soothing breezes gently waft over Prashanti Nilayam, the lovely music of devotees as they go around Swami's Mandir provides an unforgettable experience to one and all.

Nagara Sankeerthan begins at the entrance of Prashanti Nilayam with the auspicious darshan of Lord Ganesh under the spreading peepul tree. Devotees in orderly lines go around the Nilayam complex and come back to the point where they started, i.e., the Ganesh temple.

At the age of ten, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, then known as Sathya Narayana Raju or simply Sathyam, would gather a group of boys from Puttaparthi for singing bhajan songs. The group called themselves Sri Panduranga Bhajan Mandali. Inspired by the enchanting personality of Sathyam, the group would don appropriate custom-made uniforms and, with flags in their hands, go round the village, street by street, singing

bhajans to the accompaniment of cymbals. They would set a tall lamp-stand on the ground and go around it in a wide circle singing in rhythm and ecstasy. Occasionally, infectious diseases like cholera and smallpox used to rage and ravage villages all around Puttaparthi. But here in Puttaparthi, residents noticed everyone was safe, happy and healthy. They felt that it was solely due to the devotional activity of Sathyam's Bhajan Mandali. Soon residents of neighbouring villages began inviting the Mandali to come over and perform bhajans. In due course, they too noticed relief from disease and untimely death. The tiny devotional seedling planted by Sathyam in those far off times has blossomed today into the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithis and their Nagara Sankeerthan Brindas (groups) carrying on bhajan activities on a more extensive scale all over the world.

SANDARSHAN

Nagara Sankeerthan is over and it is time now for Sandarshan, i.e., public audience, familiarly known as Darshan of Bhagavan. Eager devotees are now entering the audience hall and taking seats in well-ordered rows. Meanwhile, the temple priests perform rituals of worship of the two deities. Lord Ganesh and Lord Subrahmanya, whose temples are located directly at the entrance of Prashanti Nilayam precincts. Soon the deities are bathed in holy water (abhishek), decorated with flowers and garlands, worshipped and offered arathi. The morning hours resound with Vedic manthras.

Now everyone is sitting in well-ordered rows in the audience hall waiting for the arrival of Bhagavan, the personification of the Ultimate in human form, and the

saviour of mankind. Among the eager audience are those who have come from far off lands, profess different faiths and follow different modes of worship. But here they are all one; they are keenly waiting for the same identical event that happens regularly day after day, the arrival of the ever-merciful Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Two hours have passed by but Swami has not arrived yet. Has some devotee, in deep distress, cried out for Swami from somewhere? The moment he called out, 'Oh Sai!', the Lord must have appeared in front of him, 'Yes, I am here', providing immediate succour. But after receiving the Lord's bounty, does the grateful devotee easily let Him go? Does he not shed tears of joy and does he miss the rare opportunity to bathe the feet of the Lord with flooding tears of gratitude? That must be the reason why Bhagavan has not yet arrived. Otherwise, the most compassionate Sai will never take so long and ignore the ache and anguish of the thousands of devotees eagerly waiting in the Mandir for His darshan.

Oh behold! We hear the soft tones of a flute being played heralding Swami's arrival. Thousands of heads turn in the same direction as sunflowers turn towards the Sun. With eyes peeled, devotees try to catch a glimpse of the Lord at the earliest moment. Do they see some flash of red there? That play of colour marks the direction from which He comes in. The One Absolute Truth (Ekam Sath)!

What a glorious sight it is! Clad in effulgent flame-hued garments, mercy and compassion taken physical form, personification of grace, showering gentle smiles of indescribable charm, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai is slowly moving in and going along the rows of devotees. With one hand raised in Abhaya Mudra (the gesture of assuring protection), He is satiating the parched hearts of distressed devotees. He is receiving numerous letters, which devotees humbly hold up to Him. To some, He is granting the coveted privilege of offering Pada Namaskar (salutations to His Lotus Feet); some others are blessed with vibhuti (sacred ash) manifested from nowhere by a mere movement of His palm. He is blessing some by a soft touch or by a raising of His open palm. The scene is beyond description, a sight for the Gods!

Swami has been described by scholars as "*Mouna Vyakhya Prakatitha Parabrahma Thathwam",* which may be translated as Supreme Divinity manifested through silence. Swami does not speak much, but every devotee finds that all his doubts are cleared and misgivings dissolved; all his worries get resolved as he sets his eyes on Swami. His whole being is inundated with santhi (peace), karuna (tenderness and compassion) and prema (love).

Every person there is thinking alike. "How many days and years have I longed for this moment of darshan of Swami! The ever-merciful Lord is now nearing me, in flesh and blood. He is close at hand. Let my eyes be satiated with this glorious sight. Let not my tears of joy come in the way and obstruct my vision. My mind has gone crazy in longing for Him for years and years. Here is the blessed moment; the Divine Beauty is close by. Let my eyes and my mind be feasted. My body has lost its sense of touch in waiting so long for Him. Here are the Lord's Lotus Feet. Now that they are within reach, let my body revive itself by touching those Divine Feet here and now. Oh no, my body does not move! My tongue too refuses to move and talk to Bhagavan. All these, my own eyes, my own mind, my own body, even my own tongue are failing me at this crucial moment! Tears are obstructing my vision, my tongue is tied, my body is forgetting itself because of profound joy."

Such is the power of the Sai personality. A mere look at the Lord, the ever-merciful, is sufficient to fill one and all with unparalleled peace and equanimity, and unruffled, sustained, inner happiness. As we set our eyes on Baba's form, something He Himself had said regarding the nature of His divinity rings in our ears. "I Willed," He once declared, "for My own pleasure, to create this vast universe. Before that, there was none to understand Me. I merely willed. That's all. Mountains rose; rivers flowed; the earth below and the sky above took form; oceans rolled; the Sun, the Moon, deserts, everything took shape to demonstrate My existence. Humans, animals, birds... all living beings began to speak, to hear and to move about; Man was accorded primacy. I equipped the human brain with My own

discriminative wisdom (Vijnan)." What a revelation, what profundity! Reflecting on these words will elevate us to the highest echelons of spirituality.
After fascinating the assembled gathering by His audience, Bhagavan slowly walks past rows of school children seated on the veranda of the Mandir. Despite His age in the present physical form, Swami makes Himself available to devotees every morning as regularly as the Sun does. Often we feel quite distressed at the trouble we give Him. Meanwhile, Swami selects a few persons for personal interview, conducts them one by one into the interview room and then, with a pleasing smile on his lips, goes in Himself. The morning darshan is over.

"EVEN CELESTIAL BEINGS WAIT FOR ME"

Minds of devotees are full with exhilaration generated by Darshan of Bhagavan. Eyes closed, we meditate deeply on the glorious experience just granted to us and the captivating, magnificent form of Bhagavan. And the sweet memory of a message once given by Baba comes to our mind:

"After availing of the blessing of seeing Me, retire to a place of solitude and silence. Keep your mind steady and unruffled. In that state of absolute calm, meditate on My form and the rare privilege and good fortune of having seen Me in person. You will then derive the beneficial effect of My blessings in full measure. Then you may enter into the stillness and receive the completion of My blessings. My energy goes from Me to You, as I move past you during public audience. My Divine Power radiates into your whole being. If you begin talking immediately thereafter instead of

observing silent meditation, the precious energy is dissipated, and returns back to Me without leaving its beneficial impact on you. Whomsoever I look upon undergoes a change for the better and acquires new potency, which continues to gain strength day after day. Never under-estimate the beneficial effects of having My darshan. My walking among you is a gift yearned for by the Gods of the highest heaven, and here you are receiving this grace. Doubt not that you have come by this godly boon as a reward for the spiritual merit of your earlier lives. Even celestial beings wait patiently for My darshan. On the other hand, this rare privilege is within your reach day after day. Never forget that this is all due to the merit of your previous lives. These blessings you receive will express themselves in their perfect time. Then they will blossom and bear fruit."
What a wonderful assurance! "Even celestial beings wait patiently for My darshan." These words bring to us a recollection of a couple of fantastic events.

PEDDA BOTTU'S EXPERIENCE

There was an ardent devotee of Shri Shirdi Sai Baba by name, Smt. Gali Sarada Devi. She had spent several years in close proximity to Him. More than 20 years after Shirdi Sai merged in the Infinite, she happened to meet Sri Sathya Sai and He summoned her to Puttaparthi. In due course, she was provided regular accommodation in Prashanti Nilayam. Bhagavan also gave her a pet name, "Pedda Bottu", as a term of endearment. The word means 'Big Bindi' as she used to wear an unusually large mark of vermilion (kumkum) on her forehead. It so happened that in the early hours of one morning, she was sitting in meditation under the Thapo Vriksham in Puttaparthi. It was still dark. She happened to

open her eyes and suddenly saw something unbelievable; celestial women were moving in the sky above the Prashanti Mandir. They radiated brilliant white light as they travelled over the hills towards the east. Beautiful in appearance and bright in complexion, richly adorned with flowers and garlands, they did not walk on the ground but sped high in the open sky.

Pedda Bottu guessed that they were no ordinary human beings. She could also hear melodious musical sounds. Astonished at the vision, she realized that the celestial beings were returning to their abode after having had the darshan of Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahma, the Supreme God. Pedda Bottu was a yogini and was therefore blessed with this soul-stirring experience by Bhagavan. After a little while she came down the hill and quietly opened the doors of the Bhajan Hall to find every one fast asleep. But strangely the sounds of music were still going on. She realized that some celestial visitors were still there, entertaining Baba with music and dance. In the morning when Pedda Bottu met Baba, she mentioned to Him, "Swami, I saw the celestial beings as they were returning after meeting You!" "Oh, did you?" gently smiled Swami.

RAJA REDDY'S VISION

It was Vaikuntha Ekadasi, a day of exceptional sanctity. Holy scriptures describe it as the glorious day on which Lord Sri Maha Vishnu vouchsafes darshan to devotees at the northern gateway of his celestial abode. A devotee called Raja Peddy was sleeping on the veranda on the first floor of Prashanti Nilayam. At about midnight he woke up. He noticed through the slightly open doors of Swami's room a

very bright illumination. He wondered why so much light was there at such an odd hour. He drew close and peeped through the gap between the doors. He was astonished to find several celestial beings taking turns to pay homage to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. They emitted fantastic illumination. Swami was reclining, like Lord Sri Maha Vishnu, on the bed provided by Adisesha, and was graciously accepting their homage. Seven fires were burning bright all around Swami's bed. The vision startled Raja Peddy. He quietly drew the doors close and went back to his bed on the veranda. He could sleep no further. Next day he mentioned to Swami about his heavenly experience and enquired, "Swami, who are all those persons?" Swami explained, "They are all celestial beings (Devathas). They have come for My darshan. What you saw in the form of flames are the Saptharishis, the seven great rishis. As I protect you by My blessings, you are still alive. Otherwise, the moment you set your eyes on that scene, you would have been reduced to ashes!" Sri Sathya Sai is really the human form of Parabrahma. Our humble salutations to Him.
Coming back to the proceedings in Prashanti Nilayam, in the southeastern corner within the Nilayam's Mandir, ceremonial worship and bathing in holy water (Rudra-Abhishekam) of the Salagram (representation of Lord Siva) has by now been completed. Similarly, worship and ritual chanting of the 108 sacred names (Shatha Namavali Ashtothara) of Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan as well as Goddess Lalitha Devi have been concluded. Deities are required to be worshipped through Poojas. Poojas are really the steps leading to the worship of the Self (Athma Pooja). Every deity helps in spiritually vitalising the Athma. Each pooja has to be performed with devotion and proper realization that it is but

worship of the Supreme Being enthroned in one's own inner self. Love, spiritual consciousness and awareness of the Universal Absolute - these should become part and parcel of a devotee's daily life.

BHAJAN

It is now 9am and bhajan has commenced in the Mandir. Bhagavan has come inside with a gentle smile and graced the decorated throne. He moves His hands gracefully in rhythm with the songs being sung. He has a habit of moving His fingers as if He is writing something in the air. As He smiles now and then, the audience goes into raptures. What does He write? Why does He smile as He writes? What would be the thoughts that go on in His mind? The whole picture seems so mystifying.

We are reminded of what Swami once said. "You must all have noticed that when I am seated on the throne in the Bhajan Hall, I smile as though I recognized someone. I move My fingers as if I were writing something in the air. That is because I actually speak or communicate with persons not visible to you. I always help those who pray to Me for help. But I do not give publicity to these matters. Does a father advertise the affectionate help he gives to his own son?"
The public bhajan programme comprises devotional songs related to Lord Ganesh, Lord Sri Rama, Lord Sri Krishna, the Buddha, Jesus, Sai and Allah. The singers sing soulfully, accompanied by music played on various musical instruments. Devotees too join in. In the vast gathering there, who is completely, fully and totally immersed in the devotional emotion generated by these songs? None else but Bhagavan. Witnessing Swami so immersed in deep ananda is itself a memorable and edifying experience that the fortunate onlooker will sweetly cherish and recall forever.
Swami once exhorted His devotees about the spiritual significance of bhajan through a simpel metaphor. "When you gather under a tree," He said, "and make a loud noise, every bird on the branches flies away. Human life is just like the tree on which several birds are sitting and producing distracting noise. The birds are : kama (desire, lust), krodha (anger), lobha (avarice, covetousness), moha (infatuation), mada (arrogance) and mathsarya (jealousy, envy). Together they make a cacophony of sounds disturbing your peace and equanimity. If you loudly sing the names of Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana and so on, those evil birds will fly away, leaving your minds pure and hearts in perfect peace."
Let us grasp the intrinsic worth of performing bhajan so

beautifully illustrated by Baba. Let us turn our hearts towards Him.

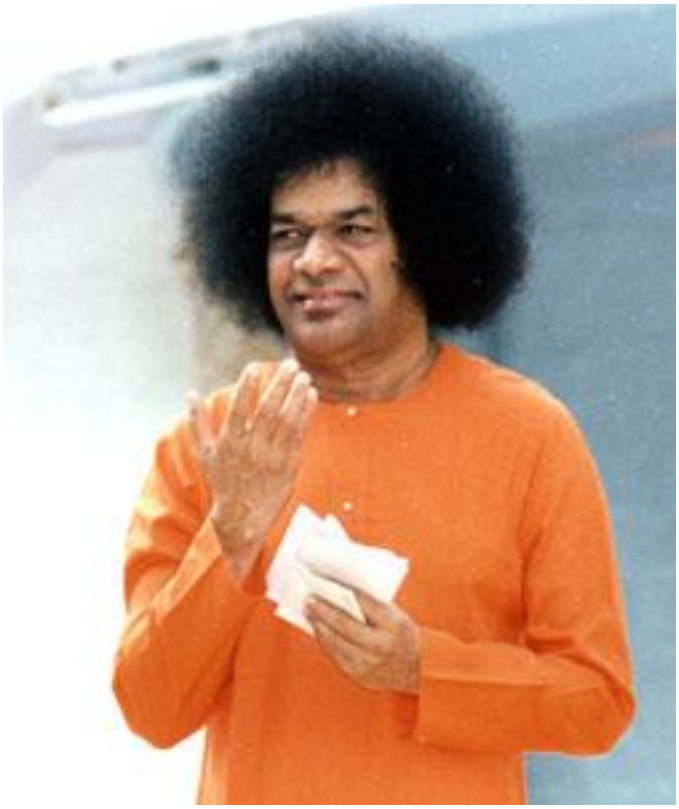
The bhajan is now concluded. Arathi has been offered to Swami and He has proceeded into His inner chamber.

This is the account of the morning activities in Prashanti Nilayam. Let us offer our salutations to Bhagavan Sai Baba; let us ruminate and meditate on His divine form; let us realize that Swami has retired only into our own hearts; and let us quietly leave Prashanti Nilayam and go home. Let us go.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 1

Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 2 - SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI



At first, name and form are essential, that is the reason why Avatars come, so that God can be loved, adored, worshipped, listened to and followed, and finally realized as nameless and formless.- Baba

Who is this Sathya Sai Baba? Is this Swami, who displays inordinate, supra-human captivating powers, truly God? Is he an incarnation? We do not know even our own nature fully. We are incapable of understanding the true nature of even our closest associates. How can we then comprehend the complexity of the Principle and personality of an incarnation? One understands the nature of the moon at least to some extent, although we have only the moonlight to go by, and lamps as reference points, can be of little use. Similarly, if we venture to understand Lord Sai, we have to

fall back on the only measuring tools available to us, namely, the illustrative incidents provided by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Himself and also His own Messages.

JODI ADIPALLI SOMAPPA

It was 25th November 1958. After witnessing Swami's birthday festivities at Prashanti Nilayam on the 23rd, Venkataram and his family left by car for Bangalore. When they reached village Bagepalli on the way, there was a crisis as their little girl, Geetha Sudha, was found to have stopped breathing. The family felt that she was on the verge of dying, if not already dead. In their agony, the family members looked around for help. An old man, apparently a farmer, appeared from nowhere. He came near and took the baby in his arms. At his touch, miraculously, the girl showed signs of life and cried. They were surprised to see the girl, whom they thought dead, come back to life so suddenly. Venkataram, the father of the little girl, was overjoyed and as a mark of gratitude offered a rupee to the unknown benefactor. The old man politely refused it. When Venkataram asked for his name, he said that he was known as Jodi Adipalli Somappa.

Later on, Swami narrated this incident to Sri Kasturi. "I went there in the form of an old villager," He said, "and it was I who gave life back to the dead child." Sri Kasturi wanted to know why Swami had thought of that peculiar name and whether any significance was attached to it. Swami explained, "Adipalli means the pristine village, the 'original' one, which is nothing but Kailasam, Lord Siva's abode. Jodi means a couple. Somappa (Sa+Uma) means Lord Siva together with Uma, His consort." Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan

thus revealed His real identity, that He is the personification of Lord Siva and Goddess Sakti, Siva-Sakti.

On another occasion, Swami asked someone by the name of Kailasam what would his name mean. He was somewhat taken aback as he did not know. He struggled in vain for a whole week searching for the answer to Swami's question. Then Swami Himself explained to him, "Kailasam signifies the cleanest, purest, and flawless crystal. It is also a symbol of the purest untainted heart. Lord Siva chose Kailasam as His celestial residence; and He also resides in a pure heart.

PREMA KUTEERAM

There stands on the highway close to Bagepalli, a building called Prema Kuteeram, the Cottage of Love and in its vicinity stands the marvelous structure celebrated as Sarva Dharma Sthoopam, incorporating the cardinal principles of all the religions of the world.

It was known as Prema Kuteeram at the time it was established in 1980. It was then known as Sri Sathya Sai Seva Sibiram (Service Camp). The organisers were Sai devotees and they used to serve refreshments to pilgrims on their way to Prashanti Nilayam to attend the festivities there, and also on their way back. By virtue of its dedicated service, the Sibiram received Baba's special appreciation and blessings. On 30 November 1980, Swami visited the Sibiram and told the organizers, "My blessings are always available in plenty to whosoever is dedicated to doing good." Inspired by Swami's blessings, the Sibiram widened its activities with renewed vigour. In due course, the Sarva Dharma Samanvaya Trust also came into being. It devoted itself to the establishment of a Seva Sadan, Orphanage and an Aged

Peoples' Home.

It so happened that Mrs Anjali Devi, the celebrated Telugu film actress, Ms P Suseela, the well-known singer and some others were on their way to Puttaparthi. The organisers greeted them and requested them to stop for a while and accept prasadam (refreshments blessed by the Lord) provided at the Sibiram. But famed travelers did not appreciate the nice gesture. They mistook the hosts to be the usual run of cinema fans who were always eager to rub their shoulders with film folk. Disdaining the kindly offer, they went on their way. When they were with Swami later, He gently admonished them, "I am present not only in Prashanti Nilayam but also in the Seva Sibiram in Bagepalli." The lesson went home. On their return journey, they made it a point to stop at the Sibiram. They profusely apologized to the organisers and humbly accepted prasadam from their hands before resuming their journey.

Swami is known to move about in the area around Bagepalli assuming various forms at will. No doubt, He does this for the wellbeing of the residents there.

On 7th June 1996, Swami inaugurated the Aged Peoples' Home there and He announced, "This Sibiram is Prema Kuteeram, Sri Sathya Sai Prema Kuteeram." Ever since it has been known by that name. The sacred touch of His Lotus Feet has often sanctified the Prema Kuteeram. On 11th June 2000, Bhagavan again visited Prema Kuteeram and to the pleasure of the devotees, declared open the rest-house for the aged, the temple for Lord Ganesh and the cow shed.

BABA, THE SIVA-SAKTHI

Bhagavan was once walking on the sand-banks of the river Chithravathi in the company of His devotees. He was smiling enchantingly and moving gracefully. That attracted a cameraman who readied himself to take a photo. When he requested, "Swami, just one picture, please," Swami tried to put him off, "No, Bangaru, no," but the photographer already clicked his camera. When in due course the film was developed and printed, the photograph showed Swami as "Ardha Nareeswara" (the divine dual form of Lord Siva - one half as Siva and the other half as His consort, Devi Parvathi)!

Around 1945, when Dussehra processions were taken out from the Old Temple in Puttaparthi, Swami used to be dressed up as Ardha Nareeswara. Among those who witnessed the exalted form were his ardent devotees, Kumaramma and Sakamma, who used to recall the splendid vision quite often.

During the Thretha Yuga, there lived a great rishi called Maharshi Bharadwaja. He loved Vedic learning and devoted a hundred years of his life to it. Even so, he could not complete his studies.

Realizing this, there could be no end to his studies, he set about doing Thapas (spiritual austerities) in the name of Devendra, the Lord of the Devathas. Devendra finally appeared before the Maharshi and told him, "You will never be able to attain full understanding of the Vedas. Give up this fruitless pursuit. Instead, perform the Savithra Yaga, which will bestow on you the spiritual fulfillment you hope to obtain through Vedic studies." Maharshi Bharadwaja also received the necessary procedural instructions from Devendra.

The Maharshi desired very much that Goddess Sakthi should be personally present at the yajna. He went to Kailasam for inviting Her in person. He found Lord Siva and Goddess Parvathi dancing together and totally engrossed. The rishi could not find a convenient moment to make his request to Goddess Sakthi. Seven days passed as he waited and waited. He was having darshan of only Lord Siva, not of Sakthi. He felt disappointed and miserable. On the eighth day, however, Sakthi gave him just a sideward glance, smiled softly, then turned quickly away and resumed her dance. Sage

Bharadwaja mistook that Devi Sakthi had delibrately slighted him. He immediately left Kailasam and headed home.

While coming down the hill on his way back, suddenly his left leg and hand went out of control, as if they were dead. His speech was gone. One eye went blind. Apparently, he had a stroke of paralysis. Lord Siva came to his rescue. He drew near and consoled him with kind words, "Don't worry, my dear rishi. Devi Sakthi has truly blessed you as well as your Yaga." With these re-assuring words, the Lord sprinkled some water from His Kamandal (pitcher) onto the disconcerted sage. Immediately, the rishi regained his faculties. Both Lord Siva and Goddess Sakthi promised that they would together attend his Yaga and bade him farewell.

Bharadwaja successfully completed his Yaga in due course. Both Lord Siva and Devi Sakthi attended it and blessed him. As a token of their pleasure, Lord Siva promised the Rishi, "Both of us will incarnate in human form in your 'gothram' (Vamsam, dynasty) no less than three times. In the first incarnation, I will be Sai Baba in Shirdi. In the second, both of us together will incarnate in Puttaparthi as Sathya Sai Baba. Finally, Devi Sakthi will incarnate as Prema Sai." He went on to say, "Oh rishi, when you came to Kailasam, Devi Sakthi ignored you for eight days. In atonement thereof, when both of us take human form in your dynasty, Devi Sakthi too will suffer in the same way as you had suffered in Kailasam. When that happens, I will sprinkle holy water on Sakthi and make Her regain the faculties in the same way as I restored yours in Kailasam."

On 29th June 1963, Bhagavan Sai Baba suffered a stroke due

to thrombosis and the left side of His body was paralyzed. Hundreds of devotees who had assembled in Prashanti Nilayam were agonized on seeing the suffering of the Master. During that week, Swami was in coma for three days. He survived four heart attacks. Disconsolate devotees could do nothing but shed bitter tears in utter helplessness. After a full week, on the Guru Poornima day, 6th July, Bhagavan was very carefully brought down from his upper floor apartment to the Bhajan Hall on the ground floor in the arms of Sri Kasturi, Sri Raja Reddy and Sri Krishnappa. It was obviously difficult to seat Baba as usual in his throne on the elevated dais. So, the silver throne was brought down and placed on the ground close to the dais. Soft cushions were positioned so as to avoid discomfort to Baba, and He was slowly eased into it. Baba's left hand was stiff. The left leg was equally out of control. His eyes too were unclear. On finding their beloved Lord in that terrible state of suffering, the devotees began to wail loudly. Then Swami whispered to Sri Kasturi in barely intelligible words, "This illness is not Mine. On My own volition, I have taken over this illness on Myself. No disease can ever assail Me. Let nobody worry. I cannot bear if My devotees suffer." Sri Kasturi used the microphone to announce Baba's words to the gathering.

Swami gestured for water to drink. When a tumbler of water was held to His lips, He could not hold it properly and the fingers of His right hand slipped into the water. With those fingers, He sprinkled a little water on the limp left hand and the left leg. He gently stroked His left hand with His right hand; and after in a few moments, stroked His left leg with both His hands.

The astonished assembly of devotees, now delirious with joy

and ecstasy, realized that Swami had cured Himself. They heard Him addressing them in the microphone, "Prema Swaroopulara (Oh, Embodiments of Love)!" He began delivering His customary address on the auspicious day of the Guru Poornima!

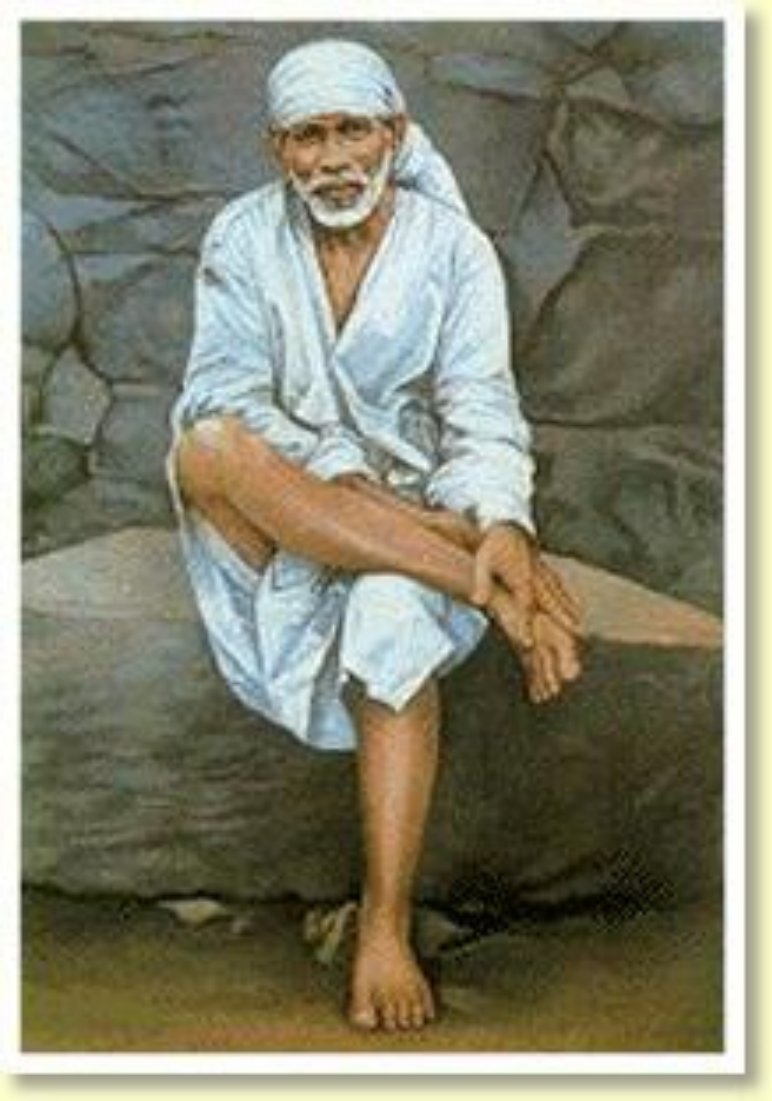
Swami spoke for an hour regaling the audience with His characteristic eloquence, lucidity and exquisite humor. He related the eight-day suffering of Rishi Bharadwaja, at the end of which Lord Siva made him whole by sprinkling holy water on his paralyzed limbs. Swami recalled the Lord's promise that He and His consort would incarnate on the earth as Siva-Sakthi, that Sakthi (represented by the left side of the body) would suffer for eight days, at the end of which Lord Siva (the right side of the body) would restore Her to health by sprinkling holy water.

In ringing tones, Swami declared, "I am Siva-Sakthi, born in the gothram of rishi Bharadwaja by virtue of the boon conferred on him by Lord Siva and Goddess Sakthi in the Thretha Yuga."

LIFE STORY OF LORD SHIRDI SAI

People knew only the later part of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba's life, i.e., subsequent to His arrival in Shirdi. No details were available regarding His earlier life. When was He born and where? Who were His parents? What was His life like prior to His appearance in Shirdi? These remained unknown until Sri Sathya Sai Baba revealed them in Prashanti Nilayam on 28th September 1990, the date and month coinciding with the birthday of Shirdi Sai Baba, as declared by Baba. Obviously, little known secrets of an incarnation can be brought to light by none else but another incarnation. The

life story of Shirdi Sai as disclosed by Sri Sathya Sai Baba is given here.



In the village of Pathri situated in the then Nizam's dominions lived a devout couple named Gangabhava and Devagiri Amma. The lady was an ardent devotee of Goddess Gowri (consort of Lord Siva, also known as Parvathi). Her husband was a devotee of Lord Siva. They had no children. This made them all the more detached from worldly concerns. They spent all their time in worship of Lord Siva and Devi Parvathi. Gangabhava plied a river boat for a living. It was the rainy season and the river was in flood. Fearing that his boat might be swept away if unattended,

Gangabhava told his wife that he would go to the banks of the river and stay there overnight with his boat and take care of it. She gave him his evening meal at 7 pm and finished her own meal soon after he left.

At about 9 pm, there was a knock on the front door. Thinking that it was her husband and wondering what made him come back so soon, she anxiously opened the door. An old man was standing outside. He promptly stepped in and said, "Oh Lady, it is very cold outside. Will you kindly give me a little space inside for spending the night here?" Hospitable by nature, she produced a mattress, gave it to him and showed him a place on the veranda to sleep in. She retired to her own room, closed its door and went to bed. But not long after, the old man knocked on the door again. When she opened it, he said, "Oh kind lady, I am feeling hungry. May I have a little rice to eat." Finding nothing worthwhile in her kitchen except some milled grain, she prepared a little meal with curds and gave it to him. She went back to her room, closed the door and prepared to sleep. After a little while, the old man once again knocked on the door. When she opened it, he said, "Dear Lady, my feet are aching. Will you kindly massage them a little?"

She was startled. She went into her pooja room, fell at the feet of Goddess Parvathi in tears and cried, "Oh, Divine Mother, what is this terrible test you are putting me to? What should I do now? Kindly save me from this humiliating situation." In a few moments, she regained her composure. An idea flashed in her mind. Leaving by the rear door of the house, she went in search of somebody who could be of service to her guest on payment. Her efforts bore no fruit and she returned home in despair.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the rear door. When it was opened, a woman stepped in and said, "Madam, it seems you came to my house asking for help to attend on an old man here. I have come to offer my services." Devagiri Amma rejoiced that her earnest prayers had been answered. She took the woman onto the veranda, left her with the old man and went back to her own room closing its door behind her.

That old man who asked for such strange service from a saintly lady, and the woman who came forward to serve him were no ordinary humans. They were Lord Siva and Goddess Parvathi! They began talking with each other. Lord Siva said, "Devi Parvathi, grant this devout lady whatever she earnestly desires." Goddess Parvathi replied, "You are the Supreme Lord. You do it yourself." Lord Siva answered, "I have come here to test her devotion. But you have come here in response to her earnest prayers. It would be appropriate if you granted boons to her."

Once again, there was a knock on the bedroom door. Now that there was another woman in the house, Devagiri Amma opened the door without any hesitation. She found Lord Siva and her beloved Devi Gowri standing in front of her in resplendent glory. Her heart was full with happiness and joy. Unable to bear the flood of emotion, she fell at their Divine Feet. Goddess Gowri spoke, "I am blessing you with a boy who will bring glory to your vamsam and also a girl so that you may derive punyam by giving her away in marriage (Kanyadan) to some one." Devagiri Amma touched Lord Siva's feet. He said, "My dear child, I am pleased with your devotion. I myself will take birth in human form as your third child." The ecstatic lady, so amply blessed, with eyes brimming, did deep obeisance to Lord Siva and Goddess

Gowri. When she lifted her head, they had disappeared.

She was now in raptures. She was now eager and impatient. When will the day dawn? When will her husband return home? How soon could she share her heavenly experience with him? She could sleep no more. At daybreak, her husband came home and heard from his wife all that had happened. But he was in no mood to believe. He said, "Dear Devagiri, you seem to have lost your senses, you must be dreaming; Lord Siva and Devi Parvathi visiting our house in person! Giving you darshan! What nonsense!" He took to ridicule. She tried to convince him, but he refused to be convinced.

Time sped by fast and Devagiri Amma became pregnant. As she anticipated, a male baby took birth. A year later, a baby girl was born. Gangabhava found that two of the events which his wife had mentioned had now come true. He was now willing to believe that Lord Siva and Goddess Parvathi had indeed given darshan to his wife. He told his wife, "You were most fortunate. I was not."

The thought got firmly rooted in his mind and grew with time. He was determined to secure darshan of Lord Siva and Devi Parvathi. Eventually his wife was pregnant again, for the third time. This final piece of proof strengthened his mind decisively. Maya

(illusion) gave way to enlightenment. Now he became restless. When should I get away from this house? 'When should I commence thapas (spiritual pursuit)? How soon would I be able to obtain darshan of Lord Siva and Devi Gowri?' These thoughts were gnawing at his heart. He undertook vows of austerity. Meanwhile, nine months

passed. He became more and more impatient. He could wait no longer. He decided that he would immediately retire to the forests to continue his spiritual pursuit vigorously. Devagiri Amma was not a person to draw back. She too accompanied him despite her delicate condition. On the way, she delivered a male baby right there on the way in the forest beneath a banyan tree. That was 28th September 1838.

Devagiri Amma swaddled the new born infant comfortably in a piece of her saree, covered him with soft leaves and left him where he was born, and followed her husband. That is how nobody knew anything about the parents of that baby until Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba revealed it all, over a century later.

There was a Sufi Fakir in the neighbouring village. He had no sons. He found this abandoned baby and took him home. From 1838 to 1842, the child grew up in that Fakir's house. After the Fakir passed away, his wife looked after the boy. His behaviour was quite abnormal. He would go to Hindu temples and shout, "I am Allah" (I am God) and "Allah Malik Hai" (God is the Master). Hindus used to trouble him. He would go into Masjids and cry, "Rama alone is God" and "Siva is Allah". Because of his odd and unconventional behavior, people of both faiths used to complain to the late Fakir's wife. She found it difficult to set him right. She knew a person, Venkusa by name, who was a scholar and a devout person reputed to be an exalted soul. She took the unruly boy to Venkusa and left him in the great man's care. From 1842 to 1851, for nine longs years, he was looked after by Venkusa, who treated him with great affection and love. That aroused jealousy and malice in the hearts of the other

residents in Venkusa's ashram. One day, the boy left that place and reached Shirdi, where he stayed for a couple of months. Thereafter, he left Shirdi too and wandered from place to place for several years.

In the course of his travels, he arrived at a village named Dhoopkheda. During his stay there, it so happened that a marriage was fixed in the household of a resident of the village, named Chand Bhai Patel, whose wife's younger brother was the bridegroom. Accompanying the bridegroom's party, the peripatetic boy went to Shirdi. It was the year 1857 and he remained there for good till his passing away in 1918. He became known as Sai Baba. His extraordinary spiritual powers were soon noticed and people began flocking to Him. He received them with kindness and compassion, patiently hearing their problems and sufferings with sympathy and love, and gave appropriate directions to enable them mental strength and confidence and spiritual guidance. Gradually, His fame spread far and wide.

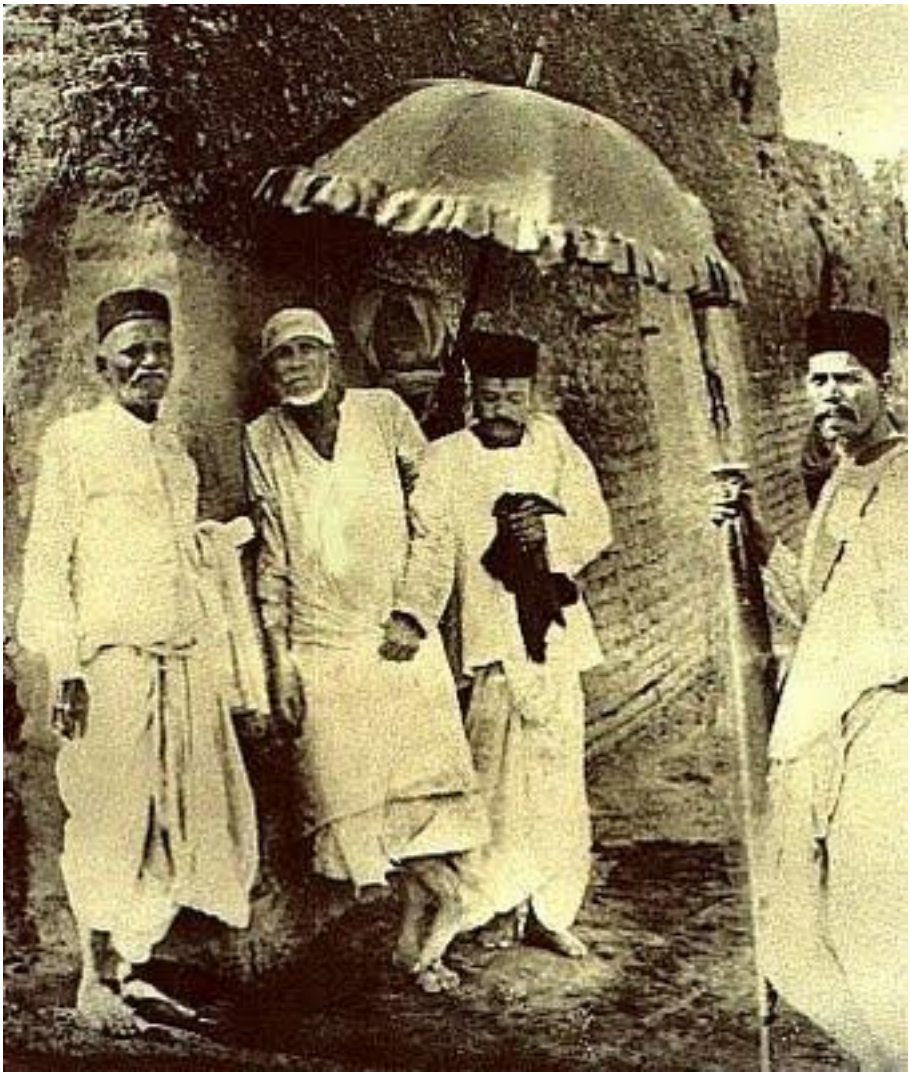
The above account was given by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He also described the close relationship between Shirdi Sai Baba and His devotees, such as Hari Vinayak Sathe, Kelkar, Shama and others. Sri Sathya Sai Baba said, "Towards the end of Shirdi Sai's earthly life, He told Abdulla who was close to Him, not to grieve at His passing away because He was going to be reborn and give him darshan again. When Abdulla enquired how soon that would be, Baba replied that it would be just eight years later; the first incarnation took place in Maharashtra; and the second one would be in Madras Presidency. (Madras Presidency at that time included Puttaparthi, which is in the present state of

Andhra Pradesh). Abdulla further asked Baba in what form he would appear in the coming incarnation. Baba replied that He would bear the name of Sathyam. Evidently, what he was referring to is this present incarnation of Sri Sathya Sai. The two bodies are no doubt different but their Divinity is one and the same," said Swami.

Bhagavan concluded the absorbing story of His previous incarnation by explaining: "The purpose of the first incarnation of Shirdi Sai was to give intimations of divinity; the second, the present one, of Sathya Sai, is for gifting of divinity; and the third, the coming one of Prema Sai, will be for teaching divinity."

SHIRDI SAI'S PROMISE

In the previous chapter, we briefly read about Smt. Gali Sarada Devi, an ardent devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. Married at an early age, she begot six male children. But not even one survived beyond the sixth year of age. Immensely distressed, she went to Shirdi and begged Sai Baba to grant spiritual peace to her. He received her with sympathy, offered her solace and facilitated her spiritual progress. She often begged Him to initiate her into some potent manthra in order to help her in spiritual advancement. He was putting her off somehow or the other, appearing on occasions to be angry too. Sometime in 1918, a little before Shirdi Sai merged in the Infinite, she held His feet firmly pleading once again for manthra- updadesh. Apparently vexed with her insistence, Sai Baba turned on her in anger and kicked her in the chest. Deeply hurt, she left him, denied herself food and slept that night in the open ground under a tree opposite Dwarakamayi.



Late in the night, the compassionate Baba approached her and gently pacified her with soothing words, "My dear child Gori, I will tell you something. Let us go to the Lendi garden. How can I sleep soundly when you are in distress and are starved?" On reaching the garden, He stretched His hand up and uttering, "Allah Malik Hai" (God is the Master), materialized a couple of puris and a bit of khoya to go with them. When she tried to go and fetch drinking water, He stopped her and materialized a tiny pot of water in the same manner as He had produced the food a little earlier. After she ate and felt relaxed, He spoke in a pleasing tone, "Look, my child Gori, I will tell you something but before that you should hold My feet and promise Me that you will not tell

this to any one." After she did so, He continued, "I will be reborn in the Andhra region with this same name of Sai Baba. You will then come to Me, enjoy My close company and attain happiness. You are now well past the need for any manthra. After you see Me in My second avathar, you may tell this to others when occasion arises." Sarada Devi considered herself most fortunate and that her life was blessed. Soon after this incident, on the Dussehra day (15th October 1918), Sri Shirdi Sai shed his mortal coil at 2:30 pm and attained Maha Samadhi.

More than 20 years sped by. She was now running an orphanage. She was travelling from place to place, giving Harikatha performances to raise funds. During her travels, she happened to go to Uravakonda. She had heard a lot about a 'miracle boy' called Sathyam. She went to see him in the house of Sri Seshama Raju, the boy's elder brother, where the boy was then staying. Sathyam noticed her and invited her to sit close to Him. When he addressed her in a pleasing tone, "Gori," she was startled as that was the same sweet and affectionate way Shirdi Sai alone, and nobody else used to address her. Sathyam added, "You owe me Rs 16. Do you remember?" She was confused particularly because she was seeing him for the first time. He went on, "You had collected Rs 40 for sending to Shirdi. But you sent only Rs 24 through Balaram. So, don't you own me Rs 16 still?" To reassure her, He said, "I have reminded you about this merely to prove to you that I am Shirdi Baba. As you came in, you did not bother to offer me even namaskar (salutation) but just sat down as soon as you entered." Poor Sarada Devi was now in tears. She fell on his feet and pressed them to her bosom just as she was habituated to do at Shirdi. Sathyam

calmed her and said, "I had told you then but you did not pay heed to my word. You forgot it altogether buy now you have reached me. I am proceeding to Puttaparthi. Follow me and I will let you know everything there." Later, at the instructions of Sri Sathya Sai, she took up permanent residence in Prashanti Nilayam. As mentioned earlier, Baba gave her the name of "Pedda Bottu". She lived in Baba's proximity in Prashanti Nilayam till the end of her life.

Shirdi Baba would often display great anger. But Sathya Sai Baba is always a picture of sweetness and pleasantness. Swami once explained the nature of this attitudinal difference, "When the mother is busy cooking in the kitchen, she gets irritated and angry if her children distract her by making even a little disturbance. But when she later serves the cooked food to them, she is full of affection, love and patience. The former avathar at Shirdi was the stage of preparing tasty dishes; now it is the stage of serving those dishes to you with love."

BODIES ARE TWO, BUT DIVINITY IS ONE

Om Shri Sai Shirdi Sai Abheda Shakti Avatharaya Namah

As a child, Madhav S Dikshit had seen Shirdi Sai Baba but spent the last phase of his life with Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba at Brindavan in White Field near Bangalore. As a boy, he suffered from unbearable pain due to migrane. Hari Sitaram Dikshit, the elder brother of the boy's father, took him to Shirdi Baba. This Hari Sitaram Diskshit was generally known as Kakasahed Dikshit. Baba rubbed some ashes taken from his Dhuni (fireplace) on the forehead of the boy and brusquely ordered him to go away. The boy was taken aback at what he felt was a slap on his face and curt dismissal. He

made up his mind never again to go to Baba. But his uncle, HS Dikshit, assured him that what he mistook as a slap was, on the other hand, Baba's blessing. Besides, what Baba ordered out so curtly to go away was not the boy but his migrane! He added, "Everyone of us here has been waiting and waiting for some such sign of Baba's grace. If only He would give a similar 'slap' to anybody, he would feel immensely blessed!" Ever since this incident, the vexatious migraine never appeared again.

Several years later, having heard that Shirdi Baba had taken reincarnation as Sathya Sai Baba, MS Dikshit went to Puttaparthi along with some of his friends. It was 23rd October 1961, Vijaya Dashami day. Speaking on that occasion, Swami said, "This Divine Power left the previous body in the year 1918. At that time, I told devotees that I would come back again after eight years. While putting down on paper what I had stated, Kakasahed

Dikshit recorded in his diary that I promised to come back 'as an eight year old boy'. This mistake occurred because Kakasaheb Dikshit did not make his noting immediately on hearing Me, but took quite a while to do so, then too, after a long time, so he relied solely on his memory."

MS Dikshit happened to be at Puttaparthi for the Siva Rathri festivities. A doubt arose in his mind, "What is this? Shirdi Baba was an unassuming personality wearing simple clothes. Could He have taken, on rebirth, the form of the dandy I see now before me? Here he seems to be dressed more like a cinema actor." All the while he was watching Bhagavan on the dais bathing Shirdi Sai's image with unending streams of vibhuti pouring out of a small vessel

held above the head of the image. He watched also the miracle of Sivalingams (an elliptical symbol of the Supreme Being) emerging out of Bhagavan's mouth. There followed a discourse from Bhagavan in the course of which He said, "Some persons present here are thinking that it is quite odd that I should wear silk clothes like a cinema actor and that I sport a peculiar type of hairdo." Dikshit was startled, he had no doubt that Baba was surely referring to his own doubts and felt disturbed.

Baba summoned MS Dikshit into the interview room. There was a photograph of his late uncle, Kakasaheb Dikshit, in his pocket. Swami saw the picture and said, "This is your uncle, HS Dikshit's picture. He was my devotee when I was in Shirdi. Do you still have any doubts in your mind?" All doubts in Dikshit's mind vanished. But a single ardent wish remained unfulfilled! He had very much desired to serve as the doorkeeper of Shirdi Baba's room. Bhagavan knew this. He fulfilled his desire by assigning the same job to him in Brindavan. Swami also said to him, "Your time has come to go to heaven, but Swami has decided to increase your life by eight years." Dikshit lived in a house right in front of the gate of Brindavan. He died eight years later.

The 2nd of October 1996 was a red-letter day. Devotees worshipped 1008 pairs of Padukas (replicas of Baba's sandals) on that day in the grand venue of Sai Kulwant Hall. Dr DJ Gadhia spoke on that occasion. When Baba spoke later, He referred to Dr Gadhia and said, "He is the son of MS Dikshit and grandson of Kakasaheb Dikshit who had lived in Shirdi. This Dr Gadhia did not see him but I saw him. His father, MS Dikshit, brought and showed to me the diaries kept by Kakasaheb Dikshit. He had recorded therein that

whatever difficulties one might face in life, one should never give up Swami. This doctor's father - MS Dikshit stayed in Brindavan for 30 years. It was I who encouraged this Gadhia to study medicine and sent him to Manipal. Subsequently, I pressed him to go to London. Thus, the association of this person with Sai Baba comes down from his forefathers' times, long, long ago.

"This is what applies to everyone here. Otherwise, there is no possibility at all of your ever coming here. You have entered onto this path only by virtue of the cumulative stock of good fortune and punyam acquired over several previous lives. There are crores of people in India. How many of them are able to come here? Many people do have the desire to come; yet they are unable to fulfill their desire. It is a matter of divine blessing that you have been able to come to this holy place," Swami said.

BABA IS ALL PERVASIVE

Tidemann Johanessen, a Norwegian from Oslo, happened to come to Puttaparthi. Swami materiliazed a ring and presented it to him to ward off the problems he was beset with. A few years later, while travelling in Bangladesh, he lost that ring in a river near Chittagong. A month after the loss, when Tidemann arrived in Whitefield, Bhagavan came to him and placed the lost ring in his hand. Swami told the astounded Tidemann, "This ring came into My hands because I am there in that river. Not only in that river, I am present in every river, everywhere." Swami is all pervasive, omnipresent.

Once a lady devotee from Kanpur came to see Shirdi Sai in Dwaraka Mayi. She saluted him and sat down. Baba asked

her whether the birthday celebrations of her son had gone on well. She told him, "Baba, we spent that day happily. We invited all our relatives and feasted them. Prior to that we arranged all the eatables in a silver plate as offerings to You and left the plate in the pooja room. As little later, we wanted to serve that prasadam to the guests but we found that the plate had disappeared. Only my husband and I, and none else, entered that pooja room. How could it disappear? We all felt unhappy at losing it. Baba, what had happened?"

Sai Baba replied, "Do you remember that as your placed the plate before Me in the pooja room, you prayed to Me to come personally on the happy occasion of your boy's birthday and partake of the naivedyam? As you had desired, I came there and ate them all. Not being sure whether you would believe it, I brought away the silver plate with me. Here it is!" He pushed His hand behind the pillow on which He was leaning, drew out the plate and gave it to her. She was immensely surprised and delighted.

Abdulla was regularly cleaning that place in Dwaraka Mayi thoroughly. He would rearrange the cushions and bed sheets daily as a part of his chores. Abdulla did not turn up on that particular day and someone else did the job. No one however, had found any plate there earlier. How did it suddenly make its appearance now? We can understand what Bhagavan means when he says He is omnipresent.

"I KNOW, YOU DON'T"

Sathya Sai Baba was then touring Kerala. At the request of His devotees, He visited a village near Trivandrum, now known as Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. In His entourage was Dr S Bhagavantham, the celebrated scientist. Devotees

far and near, attended the meeting held there. Swami pointed to Dr Bhagavantham, who was by his side, an old lady standing in a corner of the huge gathering. He mentioned that He had known her ever since her childhood. Dr Bhagavantham, wondered in his mind, "Baba is much younger. That woman is evidently much older. How could it be that her childhood is known to Swami?" He asked Swami, "Baba, You are but 30 years old. That old woman must be in her seventies. How is it possible that You know her ever since she was a child?" Baba promptly clarified that He had known her in His previous incarnation.

A little later, Dr Bhagavantham went around among the people gathered. He queitely approached the old woman, engaged her in converstation and enquired, "Did you ever visit Shirdi?" She replied, "When I was a little child, my uncle, the younger brother of my father, took me to Shirdi for Baba's darshan. Baba gave me a pendant that I still wear around my neck. Here it is." She showed it to Dr Bhagavantham, whose doubts were then cleared.

When we hear of this incident, we are reminded of a verse in the Bhagavad Gita at the beginning of Chapter 4. Lord Sri Krishna, we read there, told Arjuna, "I taught this immortal Yoga long ago to Vivaswan (the Sun God). He conveyed it to Manu, who imparted it to his son, Ikshwaku. Now, again, I have imparted this ancient Yoga to you." Arjuna queried "Oh Krishna, the Sun God is there ever since the creation. He dates back to remote antiquity. You belong to the present age. How is it possible that you had taught this to the Sun God so long ago? Lord Krishna explained:

Bahooni Me Vyatheethani Janmani Thava Cha Arjuna,
Thani Aham Veda Sarvani, Na Thvam Vettha Paranthapa.

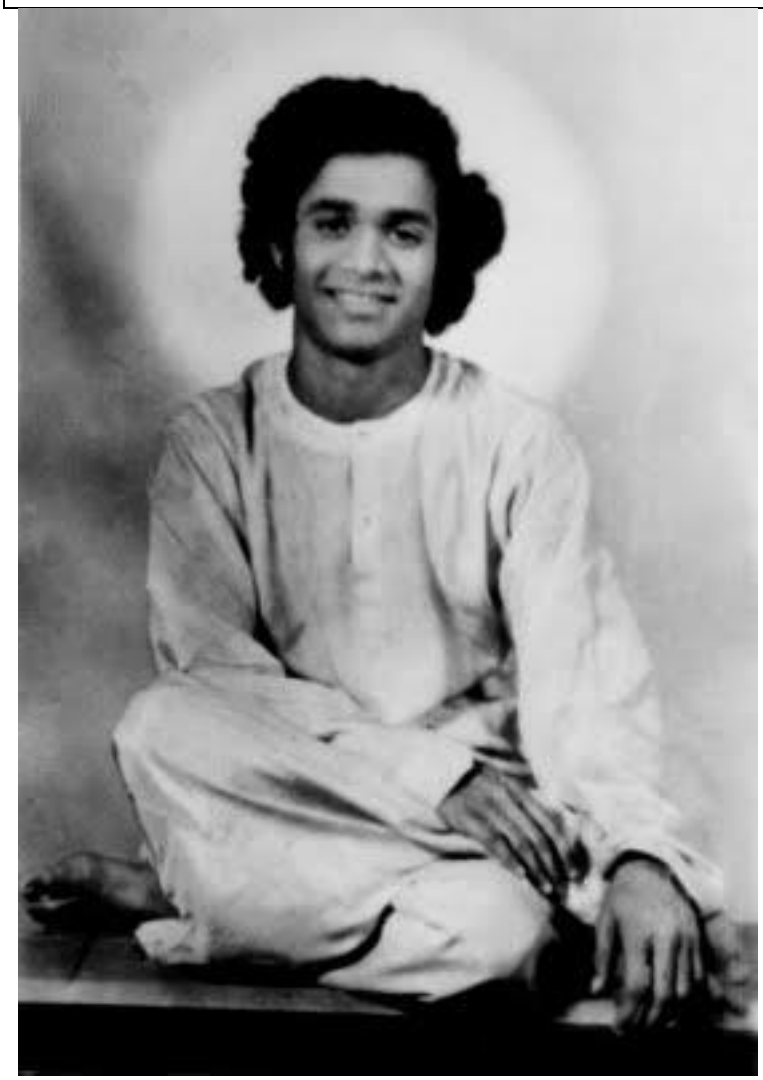
बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप ॥

"Hey Arjuna, you and I have passed through numerous births. I possess the awareness of all those births; but you do not."

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 2
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

DAY 2 : FRIDAY

CHAPTER 3 - SAMBHAVAMI YUGE YUGE (I INCARNATE AGAIN AND AGAIN)



Yada Yada hi Dharmasya Glanir Bhavathi Bharatha
Abhyutthanam adharmasya tadhathmanam srujamyaham
Parithranaya Saddhoonam Vinashaya cha duskhrutham
Dharma Sansthapanarthaya Sambhavami Yuge Yuge

~ Sri Mad Bhagavad Gita (Ch 4, verse 7.8) ~

PUTTA VARHADHANI

The present day village of Puttaparthi was known in olden times as Gollapalli (the village of cowherds). The whole area was populated with cowherds and their cows. One day, a cowherd of the village noticed that one of his cows had returned from grazing fields with an empty udder. This continued to happen for the next several days. He decided to stalk her quietly to the fields to find out who might be stealing her milk. The cow went as usual to the woods with the keeper watching her every movement with peeled eyes. She approached a snake-hill out of which emerged a wondrous serpent, wound itself around the cow's hind legs and fed itself from the udder without hurting the cow. The cowherd lost his temper. It did not occur to him that this serpent might be something uncommon or divine. He picked up a heavy stone and hurled it at the serpent. Blood flowed out and stained the stone. The serpent died. Ever since that incident, cowherd families of Gollapalli gradually declined in numbers and serpent-hills proliferated all over. People believed that the dying serpent cursed the villagers, which was the root-cause of their misery. As time passed, Gollapalli acquired the dubious distinction of being known as Putta Vardhani (place where snake-hills abound).

The contrite villagers took the blood-stained stone which had killed the serpent, named it Gopala Swami (Krishna, the cowherd) and installed it in the village for regular worship. The charming name of Krishna evokes the childhood pranks and amusing frolics of Lord Krishna who grew up among cowherds. As a boy, he playfully stole milk, butter and curds to feed himself and his cohorts and playmates. The villagers worshipped the stone as Krishna, the cowherd, as an act of

penitence and atonement. Soon enough, the village prospered and grew, and came to be known as Puttaparthi. During the reign of the great ruler, Sri Krishnadeva Raya of the Vijayanagar Empire, it earned renown as a stronghold of brave warriors who lent their services to the royal forces. A temple was built and elaborate arrangement were initiated for regular rituals of worship in the traditional manner, i.e., offer of pooja, lighting of the sacred lamp, offer of incense and naivedyam to the deity, and so on. The prosperity of the village grew more and more. After the advent of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai, He confirmed the divinity of that deity. At His instance, bathing of the deity (abhishekam) and application of sandalwood paste all over, were introduced. To the wonderment of the devotees, the stone revealed the divine form of Lord Sri Krishna with flute in hand!

There is in Puttaparthi a distinguished and devout family with the family name of 'Ratnakara'. A great saint called Venka-Avadhootha was one of their ancestors. The paternal grandfather of Sathya Sai, named Kondama Raju, was a highly evolved soul and led a life of devotion to God. He could recite from memory stories and verses from the sacred epics of Sri Maha Bhagavath and Ramayana. Inspired by a dream, he built a temple for Goddess Sathyabhama Devi, the consort of Lord Krishna. It is now known in Puttaparthi as Sathyamma's temple. Lakshmamma was Kondama Raju's wife. The saintly couple had two sons. In memory of Venka-Avadhootha, they were named Peda (the elder) Venkama Raju and China (the younger) Venkama Raju. Both of them, like their father, became accomplished singers of devotional verses and songs.

EASWARAMMA

Some close relatives of Kondama Raju were residing in a village called Kolimikuntla in the Koyalakuntla Thaluka of Kurnool District. Their family name was Meesraganda. Subba Raju of that family built a temple for Lord Siva in his village. While the temple was under construction, Subba Raju was blessed with a female baby, who was named Namagiri. While returning from a pilgrimage, Kondama Raju happened to visit that village. He was very much distressed to find that his relatives were leading uneasy lives due to the depredations of dacoits active in that region. He invited them to come over and take permanent residence in the village of Karnata Nagapalli on the other bank of the river Chithravathi, right opposite to Puttaparthi, which he said, would be a safe haven. As an added incentive, he gave his word that he would accept Namagiri as his daughter-in-law.

The Meesaraganda family soon shifted and settled down in Karnata Nagapalli and took up farming. As divinely ordained, Subba Raju's daughter was wedded to Peda Venkama Raju. Not quite pleased with the name his daughter-in-law was given by her parents, Kondama Raju changed it to Easwaramma (mother of Lord Easwara, i.e., Lord Siva). That name eventually proved not only quite appropriate but also prophetic! The devout couple begot a son, Seshama Raju, and two daughters, Venkamma and Parvathamma. To the great distress of Lakshmamma, four miscarriages followed. She earnestly prayed to God to bless her family with another child.

SWAMI'S INCARNATION

The moment of divine fulfillment was about to dawn. The prayers of numerous saints, sages and renunciates for the incarnation of God on earth were about to be answered. The agony of suffering humanity moved the ever-merciful Supreme Divinity. Easwaramma was again pregnant, for the eighth time. Quite significantly, Lord Krishna was born as the eighth child of his mother, Devaki Devi. The Inscrutable, the Incomprehensible, the Universal Absolute was now about to reveal Himself. Musical instruments in the house, like mridangam (percussion instrument) and thanpura (stringed instrument) used to produce, of their own accord, musical sounds. People were surprised and also delighted at this extraordinary occurrence, but at the same time, they were confused and concerned. Peda Venkama Raju went all the way to the nearby town of Bukkapatnam to consult astrologers. After carefully going through ancient texts, they enquired whether any lady in the house was pregnant. When the reply was affirmative, the astrologers said, "For the pleasure of the child in the womb, celestial musicians are providing entertainment. When divine incarnations are about to take place, such unusual incidents happen!" They showed relevant parts of astrological treaties to Peda Venkama Raju in support of their opinion.

It was 23rd November 1926. According to the Hindy calendar, it corresponded to Somavar (Monday), Thadia (the third day) after the full moon, Karthika month, Akshaya year and ardra star. Hindus consider Mondays of the Karthika month as favourite days of Lord Siva and perform special worship. From 4 am on that day, Lakshmamma was deeply absorbed in the worship (vratham) of Lord Sri

Sathyanarayana Swami, being performed in the nearby house of a purohit (Brahmin priest). She was called several times as her daughter-in-law's delivery was imminent. But she ignored the calls. She decided not to return home without seeing the pooja through and receiving the 'pooja prasadam'. She sat through and did indeed carry the prasadam home. She gave prasadam to her daughter-in- law. It was now 5.06 am. Cool breezes were wafting softly. Little bells on the top of the temple pillar (dhwaja sthambham) were producing gentle and melodious sounds. Inside the house, musical notes from the instruments spontaneously playing on their own were softly reverberating. At that wondrous moment, Sri Sathya Sai, the divine incarnation was born. He had a tiny black mole (birthmark) on his left cheek. He had also another mole on his bosom, like the Srivatsa ornament adorning the bosom of Lord Maha Vishnu. On his soles could be discerned the signs of Sankha (the conch) and Chakra (the circular disk) which are insignia of divinity.

Lakshmamma, Easwaramma's mother-in-law, placed the newborn baby delicately on palm leaves, as tradition demanded, in a corner of the delivery room. A little later, she noticed a slight movement of the baby's bed sheets. When she picked up the baby, she found to her dismay, a coiled cobra below the bed! True enough, Puttaparthi knew no dearth of snakes. But it was nevertheless quite unusual for a coiled cobra positioning itself as a bed for a new born baby right in the delivery room. After the flutter caused by its presence cooled down, the snake was searched for but it could not be found. There is absolutely no doubt that the snake was none other than Adishesha, the divine serpent

who serves as a bed for Lord Sri Maha Vishnu in Vaikuntha. This is the very first demonstration of the divinity of Sri Sathya Sai.

As the baby was born immediately after his mother had partaken of the prasadam of Lord Sri Sathya Narayana Swami, he was given the name of Sathya Narayana. The old man, Kondama Raju, was immensely delighted with this name. For he was reminded of the incident in the Sri Maha Bhagavath when Lord Sri Krishna was born as the human incarnation of Lord Narayana. Lord Brahma presented himself before the child and paid homage thus:

Sathya Vratham, Sathya Param, Thri Sathyam,
Sathyasya Yonim, Nihitam cha Sathye,
Sathwasya Sathyam, Ritha Sathya Nethram,
Sathya-Athmakam, Tvam Sharanam Prasannah.

(Oh Lord, You are the embodiment of truth. In fact, You are the truth itself; only You are the eternal truth. Truth is the only path to reach You. Oh the personification of truth, I surrender to Thee!)

Even if one goes by the name given to the little baby, Sathyam, it is evident that he is truly Lord Sri Narayana and the embodiment of truth (Sathyam).

The inner, profound spiritual significance of the word "Sathya" has come out in all its striking appropriateness in Swami's life. Ritham and Sathyam are the two bejeweled ornaments of the ears of Sruthi Matha (Veda Matha, the Mother Goddess of the Vedas). When we contemplate deeply on their meaning and spiritual significance, even now ever new beauties are revealed to us. Sathyam (eternal truth) and

Nithyam (knowing no beginning or end) are worth meditating on.

NOT CONCEPTION, BUT ADVENT

In the Sri Maha Bhagavath, it has been stated that Lord Narayana intended to incarnate on this earth as Sri Krishna and "entered" the womb of Devaki Devi. After Bhagavan Sathya Sai proclaimed, "I am that Krishna of yore," a doubt arose in the mind of a learned scholar named Sangubhatla Rama Sarma. He was the scholar-laureate (asthana Pandit) of the ruler of Venkatagiri, and he was a learned scholar of scriptures and sacred epics. One day, he happened to be with Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the mandir when spiritual matters were being discussed. He asked, "Swami, was your birth through normal conception (pravasam) or by advent (pravesham)?" Everyone present was intrigued and somewhat surprised, "What is this odd question and, in any

case, what is its property?" they wondered. But Swami certainly knew the inner substance and profound significance of the question. He turned towards Easwaramma, the mother, who was sitting in the front row, and said, "Tell Rama Sharma what happened on that day when you were lifting water from the well."

Easwaramma then narrated her experience: "When I was lifting water from the well", she said, "suddenly I saw a ball of bluish sparkling light rolling down from the sky. It entered my body and I lost consciousness. When I regained my senses with ministrations of my mother-in-law, I told her what had happened. She advised me not to breathe a word about it to anyone because people might draw all sorts of undesirable and funny inferences."

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai now turned to Rama Sarma and said, "Do you now understand, Rama Sarma? My brith was not through conception but by advent."

Kondama Raju used to take this extraordinary child into his pooja room and seat him there. As he would perform the worship, he would note that the child's presence gave him immense tranquility of mind and he could effortlessly concentrate on God in meditation. Why not? It is perfectly understandable. Whoever enthrones Bhagavan in his heart is bound to experience transcendental peace, which is something that every devotee knows from personal experience.

The baby was extremely handsome. Neighbouring women folk used to spend hours and hours playing with him, caressing him and embracing him. Easwaramma never

bothered to know what caste or community or faith they belonged to. She raised no objection whatsoever. The baby too learned to love them and liked their company. He would often run away from his mother's lap to the company of others. He was indeed restless except in their company. Bhagavan Sathya Sai once declared that He would unfailing go to those who yearned for Him wholeheartedly. When we hear of his childhood pranks and plays, we realize that even as a child, he had been practicing what He declared much later, after he grew up.

The house next to the one adjoining Kondama Raju's belonged to a Karanam (village revenue official). The lady of the house was Subbamma. Whenever she took the charming child in her arms, his face would glow in happiness; he would titter with delight and she would experience supreme joy. She had no children of her own. She often took this child to her home, as proudly as if she was bringing home precious treasures. She smothered him with her motherly love. Subbamma's family was a Brahmin family and was vegetarian in food habits. As Sathyam always insisted on going to her house and found much happiness there, people used to observe that, like his grandfather, Kondama Raju, little Sathyam would also be a vegetarian and hence, he preferred to spend much of his time in the environment of Subbamma's house. In fact, Sathyam was not as happy in his own house as he was ins Subbamma's. Some of the relatives of Kondama Raju's family used to comment that Easwaramma was 'Devaki' (the natal mother of Lord Krishna) while Subbamma was 'Yashoda' (his foster mother).

Another unusual feature of Sathyam was that he never used

to ask for any particular thing to eat nor for any particular piece of clothing. Clothes used to be brought from the neighbouring towns of Hindupuram and Ananthapuram for all children in the family. The little ones would gather around them and eagerly snatch up pieces they preferred. But Sathyam would cheerfully accept whatever was left behind. He never indicated that he had any choice of his own; there was nothing that he would particularly prefer. On the other hand, when he saw the other children in happiness, Sathyam's face would bloom with pleasure and satisfaction. "Your happiness is My food," Swami declared many years later. That surely, must have held true even when Sathyam was a mere child.

He was full of pity, compassion, love and sympathy for any living being subjected to hardship and grief. A few playful boys once collected about a dozen frogs and were carrying them in a basket. They planned to have fun by subjecting the poor creatures to some sort of torture. Sathyam requested that they be freed. The boys did not agree. Suddenly, Sathyam transformed them into pigeons through his divine will. He told them that there were no frogs in their basket. When they disbelievingly opened the lid to see, the birds escaped into the sky.

We can read a spiritual meaning too in this incident. From that day to this day, Bhagavan has been transforming ordinary individuals, who are entrapped and living like frogs in the deep mire of ignorance (Ajnan), into strong human beings who are bold and happy and capable of soaring free in the spiritual firmament like birds in skies.

Even as a little boy, Sathyam was fond of natural beauty. He

spent much time contemplating nature. Mountain peaks, stars and sky gave him profound happiness as he contemplated on them spellbound. At such times, he appeared serene and serious, way beyond his tender age. The women of Puttaparthi who had seen him so lost in his thoughts used to refer to him as "Brahma Jnani" (one who attained supreme realization). They might have, no doubt, said so in mirth and frolic; they could never suspect that the boy they were making fun of was indeed a Brahma Jnani.

DIVINE TOUCH

Easwaramma and Karanam Subbamma would often sit, at dusk in the front protico of their houses overlooking the street, and spend time in conversation. Right in front of them in the street, Sathyam would wear a bandage across his eyes and play hide and seek with his colleagues. That was the time when cattle headed home from pasture. There was always the risk of unruly animals trampling passers by. Easwaramma would naturally feel apprehensive about her darling child's safety. But Subbamma would always reassure her : "Calm yourself and just keep watching. Nothing untoward will happen." The blindfolded Sathyam would catch hold of some rogue animal. Under his gentle touch, the animal would become docile, lower its head and move away harmlessly. Such incidents used to leave onlookers baffled.

Probably because Sathyam was born under the auspicious influence of the 'ardra' star, his heart would melt at the very sight of suffering. (ardra in Sanskrit means compassionate). If a hungry person stood at his door, Sathyam would run inside, bring some food and place it affectionately into the outstretched hands. The glow of happiness in the eyes of the

hungry person would fill Sathyam's heart with satisfaction. He used to bring to his home, persons shivering from cold and gave them clothes to cover themselves. It was customary for people to carry fowl upside down by their legs, bound together and heads hanging down, a position tortorous to the poor birds. Bullocks were goaded to move faster by twisting their tails cruelly. At the sight of such insensate cruelty, Sathyam would suffer the agony of the poor birds and animals in himself.

After finishing school in Puttaparthi, Sathyam went to the nearby town of Bukkapatnam and enrolled in the middle school. The loving mother watched with bated breath as her little child prepared day after day to go to Bukkapatnam; he was hardly out of his cradle, but now he had to walk all the way to town! Sathyam would put on a white shirt and shorts, apply vibhuti on his forehead, and a red dot of vermillion to lend accent to it. With a small bag contining his simple mid-day meal of cooked ragi (a coarse grain) in one hand, and a bag of books in the other, he would bid her goodbye every morning. The poor lady's eyes would swim in tears. He would leave home at about 8.30am and return only at dusk. How could she endure the agony of his absence until then? Sadness haunted her every moment of the day.

His fellow pupils at school were envious of Sathyam. He was evidently the cynosure because of his excellent sense of cleanliness and immaculate orderliness. As soon as the boys stepped out of the village, they would catch hold of Sathyam and duck him in the river Chithravathi to make his spotless white clothes dirtier than theirs. Their dirty deed accomplished, they would feel happy and fulfilled. But never would Sathyam complain to his beloved mother against them.

THE TEACHER'S CHAIR

In the school in Bukkapatnam, a teacher by the name of Kondappa was dictating 'notes' to his pupils who were assiduously taking them down. Sathyam alone was not doing so, which annoyed the teacher. How could he know that Sathyam, the all-knowing and all- comprehending, had no need for taking down any notes? He ordered Sathyam to stand upon the bench, a punishment usually meted out to delinquent boys. The boy meekly obeyed. Time passed and the bell struck to mark the end of that class and Kondappa had to leave. Though he tried to get out of his chair, he could not as it stuck to his bottom. The teacher who was to take the next class was Mehboob Khan. He came in and understood the situation. He asked Sathyam to get down and be seated. As soon as Sathyam took his seat, Kondappa was automatically released from his own chair. This was but one small leela (playful prank) of Sathyam that was played merely to demonstrate that he was no ordinary run-of-the-mill schoolboy. News of this episode soon spred in Bukkapatnam and caused some unrest too. The incident proves that an incarnation of God cannot be bound by man-made limitations. In due course, Kondappa recognized Sathyam's divinity and also wrote and published some poems in his praise.

When the story of the teacher's chair reached Easwaramma, she feared for the future of her boy's education. She cautioned Sathyam, "If you do not study hard and succeed in your schooling, you will have no future but to eke out a living by tending cattle." Well, can the word of Bhagavan's mother ever go wrong? Swami did not work hard at his studies in school. But, as His divine mother had warned, He

is certainly tending cattle! What are the animals now in His care? All living beings are now under His care and protection! That is why He has verily become Pashupati (the Lord of animals, one of the attributes of Lord Siva). His simple-minded mother had never dreamt that her darling child, so remiss at school, would eventually take up such a glorious job, that of minding the universe as Bhagavan.

The end of the year saw Sathyam appearing for the final examinations held in the town of Penugonda. He came first, and the people of Penugonda took out a grand procession in honor of this brilliant boy. In her heart of hearts, Easwaramma was delighted at the success of her charming boy, but she was at the same time worried that this might arouse more jealousy amongst the other boys. Often did she wonder and feel astonished at some of the words uttered by Sathyam, his decisions and conclusions, the sharpness of his views and the manner in which he expounded them.

Subbamma's husband, the Karanam, was sporting a moustache all too odd and prominent, somewhat in the style of Hitler, his conduct also was rather unusual. Sathyam composed songs making fun of him and organized his colleagues to sing them in public. Easwaramma would not approve of such mischievous activities. She entrusted the task of correcting Sathyam, of all people, to Subbamma! Subbamma admonished Easwaramma, "That little Guru (Master) knows how to distinguish between good and bad. Leave it to him and let him be."

With a mere wave of his hand, Sathyam would materialize whatever his companions asked for, be it a fruit or a flower or sweets. When they asked to know where he was getting

them from, he merely said that some celestial beings were giving them to him. Yes, there can be no doubt about what he claimed. Swami is the supreme master; it is but natural that heavenly beings should serve Him with whatever He demands!

TIGER-HUNTER CHIDED

It was around noon one day when a driver in uniform was noticed striding into Puttaparthi. As he walked in, birds on the branches of trees raised loud cries of fear and distress. Sathyam was sitting in the front portico of Karanam Subbamma's house conversing with his friends. As the driver stepped up there, the children scattered in fright.

The man told Sathyam that his master's jeep got stranded on the other bank of the river Chithravathi. The master was in a hot temper. Having heard that a boy of miracles was in this village, he had come here to obtain some vibhuti if it could get the master out of his problem. Sathyam agreed to follow him to the jeep. The master was proudly stroking the dead body of a tigress, evidently shot by him in the forest. Sathyam said to him, "What harm has this poor animal done to you?" Why have you killed it for no reason? Her two little cubs are missing their mother and are feeling miserable. It was I who made your vehicle break down to make you realize this. Go back to those little motherless cubs, rescue them and entrust them to the care of a proper zoo. Never should you kill a living being for your own pleasure and enjoyment. You might shoot, but only with a camera, not with a gun. That would bring you name and fame." Surprisingly, the engine of the vehicle sprang to life with a mere touch of Sathyam, and it went back the way it had

come.

Peda Venkama Raju, Sathyam's father, was in a panic situation at home. For defying an Englishman, that too, one who was sporting a gun, his little son might invite trouble from the police. On the other hand, the Englishman felt remorseful. Some time later, he brought the skin of the dead tigress and offered it to serve as a footrest for Sathyam. Even today it is there in Prashanti Nilayam near Swami's throne serving Swami as His footrest.

Each and every incident of Swami's life serves as a mirror reflecting the essentiality of Swami's divine personality. Swami is the personification of ahimsa (principle of non-violence). Embodiment of compassion and pity for helpless creatures, He is Jesus Christ and Bhagavan Buddha personified. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the teacher of teachers.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 3
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 4 - SAI BLOSSOMS

This Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting the entire mankind as one family, through the bond of brotherhood; of affirming and illuming the inner reality of each being in order to reveal the divine which is the basis on which the entire cosmos rests; and of instructing all to recognize the common Divine Heritage that binds man to man, so that man can rid himself of the animal and rise to the divine which is his goal. - Baba

Seshama Raju married the sister of Pasumarthi Venkata Raju of Kamalapuram in the Cuddapah district. He was keen that his younger brother, Sathyam, should be given high school

education. So he brought the youngster to Kamalapuram and put him in the local high school. But it so happened that Seshama Raju had to himself leave the place and go elsewhere to undergo teachers' training.

PUSHPAGIRI FESTIVAL

Sometime after Sathyam got admitted into the high school, the annual festival at Pushpagiri, a temple town nearby, was to be held. The physical education instructor of the school organized a scout troop for doing service during the festival. Sathyam enrolled himself in the troop as he felt that it would enable him to do social work and service. As he did not have enough money to spend, he did not join the school group going to Pushpagiri but went there separately by himself, walking all the way. He could not afford to buy food. So he just fasted all the days he was there. He never mentioned this either to his teacher or to his companions. He cheerfully participated in all the social service activities of his troop. If anyone asked him whether he had his meals, he would hold out his hand for them to smell. His hand would smell of sweets made of pure ghee. His friends believed that he must have taken some tasty food at some of his relatives' house. The scoutmaster would allocate duties evenly to all the boys in his charge, including Sathyam, though Sathyam was not as sturdy as the others. Restoring missing children to their parents, providing drinking water to the pilgrims, looking after their medical requirements and rendering first aid - these were some of the activities Sathyam was engaged in. By his dedication and assiduousness, Sathyam set a fine example as a social worker.

The scout troop, of which Sathyam was a star in the

Pushpagiri festivities, was undoubtedly the precursor of the present day Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal that is rendering yeoman services to mankind throughout the world.

On successfully completing his teachers' training course, Seshama Raju was appointed as a Telugu teacher in Uravakonda. As a teacher, he was describing to the children of his class the childish pranks of Bala Krishna and Sri Rama, but he could not understand the meaning of the leelas being displayed in his own home by the God incarnate. Both he and his father mistakenly attributed them to goblins and evil spirits. Seshama Raju firmly believed that if his little brother were entrusted to his care, he would soon set him right by liberal used of the rod. With a heavy heart, poor Easwaramma agreed to send her darling son to Uravakonda.

"I AM THE SERVITOR OF ALL"

Sathyam was admitted in grade VIII in the high school in Uravakonda. He lived with his brother, Seshama Raju. There was no drinking water in the house. It had to be fetched from a well a mile away from the town. To meet daily needs, Sathyam, would bring water every day, morning and evening, making two or three trips each time. He would carry two large containers on each trip, slung one at each end of a bamboo pole balanced on his shoulders. The neighbours soon discovered Sathyam's affable and obliging nature. They would ask him, endearingly, to fetch some water for them too! And the lad would cheerfully meet their requirements as well.

Sathyam returned to Puttaparthi for the holidays. Easwaramma prepared to give her little boy an oil bath.

When she set about applying oil to his body, she found calluses on his shoulders. The skin too had darkened. He tried to evade her anxious enquiries but, when pressed, he explained with a disarming smile, "It is probably due to my bringing water for our elder brother's household." Eyes brimming, the loving mother enquired why he should have to fetch water. Sathyam replied, "How can they live on brackish water? That apart,

Dear mother, is it not a fact that I have come only to serve people?" The answer brought no solace to the distressed mother.

Anne Marie Marwaha, a lady employed with the German Embassy in New Delhi, had enjoyed the good fortune of tasting the sweetness of Bhagavan's love. On one of her visits to Puttaparthi, she asked, "Swami, what is the true nature of your incarnation? I fail to understand it."

Bhagavan softly replied, "What shall I say? To tell you in a nutshell, I am the servitor of all." The reply took her by storm. In a torment of pity, she sobbed uncontrollably. She cried, "Why do you say like this, Baba?" Swami explained, "Dear child, that is but the simple truth. Everyone gives Me a job to do. Whoever does everyone's errand is indeed the servitor of all. Is it not?"

Bhagavan's words and deeds - be them of His childhood days or of the present day, are the same. Swami fetched drinking water as a child. Even today, grown up as He is, He is still fetching fresh, wholesome, drinking water. The only difference is that a new name has now been given to his labours: Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project. In the olden

days, neighbours requested him, "Baba (dear boy), will you bring some drinking water for us too?" Today, people from neighbouring districts are praying to him, "Baba, will you give some drinking water for us too?" Bhagavan answers, with boundless love and affection, "Yes, yes, certainly, certainly." Some of them have only heard of Puttaparthi but do not know where it is. They have to enquire and find out how to reach there. In their distress, they make their arduous way to Baba, to their Divine Mother for succour. And sure enough, the compassionate Mother responds, "My poor children have come to Me praying, not for sumptuous feast, but for a mere quaff of water!" The motherly assurance of Bhagavan comes forth spontaneously, "Surely, surely." It is not one mother speaking but a thousand mothers. Indeed, it is the love of a million mothers!

Swami achieves single-handedly what an entire government or a whole nation could not accomplish. The beneficiaries are His own children. For their welfare, He has spent, and is spending, hundreds of crores of rupees on a drinking water project. People are grateful; but can this immense debt of love be repaid ever?

The Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project has so far covered about 750 villages and 11 towns. It is considered to be one of the marvels of the world. Water flows through 2500 kms of pipeline and quenches the thirst of a million people in the Rayala Seema region of Andhra Pradesh. The nectar-like love of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is visible in every metre of the long pipeline.

DO DEEDS MATCH WORDS?

During his schooldays in Uravakonda, Sathyam was encouraged and inspired to write a short play dealing with human values. It was significantly titled, "Do Deeds Match Words?" The details of that play written a long time back are topical even today.

Scene 1 of the play opens with a woman who is reading and interpreting verses in the Sri Maha Bhagavath to a group of women. In the course of her discourse, she exhorts her audience not to waste charity on able-bodied beggars and the indolent, but to help only those who are infirm, disabled, old or handicapped. After the gathering disperses, a blind man approaches her and begs for help. She is annoyed and drives him away. A moment later, a Haridas, wearing prominent caste marks all over his body and singing songs, comes begging for alms. He is playing on a stringed instrument as an accompaniment to his singing. The lady gives him some rice as well as cash, bows to his feet and seeks his blessings.

Krishna, her son, is a witness to what has gone by. He is perturbed and asks her, "Dear mother, what did you teach your friends during your religious discourse, and what have you done just now?" She gets wild and shouts at him, "Shut up. Does anybody do as he says?"

Scene 2 shows the same boy with his father in the latter's office. His father extols the benefits of education and concludes his speech saying that one should obtain good education overcoming every obstacle. A poor boy standing outside is overhearing the inspiring words through an open

window. He comes in and says, "Sir, thanks to monetary assistance from high-minded persons like you, I manage to pay my school fees. But now I am short of one rupee to pay this month's fee. Kindly help me." The gentleman replies that he does not have even a paisa with him and opens his purse to show that it is empty. After the disappointed student leaves, several colleagues descend on him and ask for contributions for a function and refreshments to welcome an officer newly posted to the office. In his opinion, he tells them; such an important occasion deserves to be celebrated on a big scale and gives twenty rupees as his contribution.

His son, Krishna, a mute witness to all this, asks his father, "Daddy, you spoke at length and in glowing terms about the value of education and the importance of getting educated at any cost. But when that poor school boy begged for just a single rupee for the sake of educating himself, you turned him down. On the other hand, you have readily parted with twenty rupees for the sake of an ostentatious waste. Why?" The man turns on him in great annoyance, "Do deeds of people match their words? Shut up and go to school."

In scene 3, Krishna is seen sitting in his class. His teacher enters in a great flurry. "The inspector of schools is visiting us today," he tells the class. "We have finished 23 lessons so far. But if the inspector asks you, tell him that we have completed 32. I will now do the thirty-third lesson. Later, when the inspector comes here, I will teach if afresh in his presence as if I am doing if for the first time. Whatever questions I put to you now will be repeated in his presence, so that you will impress him with your correct answers." Krishna meets the teacher a little later when he is alone. He asks him, "Sir, the new lesson you taught us today is about

King Sathya Harishchandra, who was dedicated to truth irrespective of consequences. Even as you taught us about such a noble person, you directed us to speak lies. Is it proper?" The teacher flies into a rage and admonishes him, "Is there, anyone whose actions accord with his words?"

In the fourth and final scene, Krishna flings his books aside and refuses to go to school. Unable to bring him round, the parents send for his teacher. In the presence of all the three, the boy says, "You are of course teaching me good lessons. But you do not allow me to act on the precepts I hear from you. Of what use are your lessons? I do not want to learn them." The elders are spellbound but see the point. They relent and express regrets.

This is the substance of the short play written by Sathyam when he was barely 12 years of age. He also donned Krishna's role when it was played. He conveyed, through that role, to the world that hypocrisy should be eschewed, and everyone should live up to his word. From that day right up to this day, He has been exhorting people, "Mere words are not enough. Your actions should conform to what you speak." This ringing message reverberates through the entire world and guides every aspirant (sadhaka) towards spiritual elevation.

THE MISSING HORSE

When Sathyam was at school in Uravakonda, a poor Muslim of that town was making a living by plying a horse-carriage. One day, his horse went missing. Failing to find it, the poor man came to Sathyam for help. The boy directed him to a wood situated about a mile and a half away from the town.

He did so and found his horse grazing there. From then on, Muslims of the town developed great love and respect for Sathyam. News of Sathyam's uncommon abilities spread far and wide.

Long before this, Shirdi Sai Baba also displayed a similar miracle when a well-to-do Muslim by the name of Chand Bhai Patil of Dhoopkheda village in the Aurangabad District lost his mare. Disappointed and tired after a fruitless search for the missing beast, he was dejectedly dragging himself home with the saddle on his back. Shirdi Sai Baba saw him, took pity at his despondency and directed him to search for his mare in the nearby channel. Chand Patil did as told and to his great surprise and delight found the animal there.

Now, what is the deeper meaning of these two similar incidents? The horse or mare represents the human mind that is ever unsteady. One who succeeds in comprehending the true nature of mind is truly a Chitha Chor. Ashwa is the Sanskrit word for horse, meaning, one that is perpetually in motion. We normally take Ashwa to mean a horse, but it is only its broad meaning. A horse is always in motion, moving its leg, tail or ear every moment. Thus, 'Ashwa' stands for the quality of unsteadiness, the state of being continuously disturbed, restless. The Sanskrit word 'Ashwa Medha' (horse sacrifice) means "offering of one's unsteady mind to God." The Sanskrit word, 'Ashwathha' (peepul tree), likewise refers to a tree that is in perpetual motion. Even when there is little breeze its leaves keep moving. The human mind also keeps on wavering similarly both during sleep and wakefulness.

Baba says that a horse-sacrifice (ashwa medha) does not

mean that the animal should be physically killed in flesh and blood and offered to God. The true meaning is that our animal nature should be given up as an offering to God.

DIVINE PUPPETEER ACTS THE DANSEUSE

When Sathyam was at school in Uravakonda, his headmaster arranged a benefit programme for raising funds for the school. Rishyendramani, a celebrated dancer of those days, was to dance. Publicity material was printed and widely distributed. But due to some unexpected developments, she could not keep her appointment. Lakshmipathi, the headmaster, got worried and became tense. Sathyam approached him and told him not to worry. The item of dance that Rishyendramani was to perform, he said, he would himself do. The amazing item that made her justly famous was indeed very difficult to perform. She would put a bottle made of glass on her head, position a plate thereon and place some lighted oil lamps in the plate. She would then dance and, while continuing with it, pick up a handkerchief from the ground with her lips. Sathyam offered to do something more astounding. "Sir, she picks up only a handkerchief with her lips," he said. "I will pick up a needle with my eyelids. But please announce that the performing artiste is Rishyendramani herself."

Several years later, Swami described in his own words what happened on that day. "I was made to wear a saree too big for Me. The organizers provided a pigtail of the sort worn by women. As you know, while dancing, the dancer flicks it from side to side. So they made it thick and long. Lest it should fall off while I danced, they strongly tied it all over. Strings of bells adorned my ankles. They found a jalopy to

carry me from my make-up place to the venue of the dance programme. There was a run on tickets as nobody wanted to miss Rishyendramani's dance.

"When musical instruments began playing, I gently shook my ankle bells to produce captivating sounds. The audience lost themselves in ecstasy. The headmaster placed a bottle on the crown of my head. Another teacher positioned a plate gingerly thereon and lighted the lamps. Why did they do all this in public? Just to satisfy the doubters who might be thinking that I had all these things fixed firmly and securely on my head. It must be shown to their satisfaction that they were all loosely positioned.

"Music was being played for my dance. I was moving round and round on the stage. Even as I danced, I suddenly bent down and picked up with my eyelids, a needle placed on the ground. The audience clapped and clapped in delight and applause. The District Collector, an English man, came to the stage to award a medal to me. His name was Horsley. He wanted to touch me before giving the medal. I refused. He said, "I am just like a brother to you. I want to place this medal around your neck." I replied, "I am just like your sister. Put it into my hand." From the side of the stage, the headmaster was signaling to me that he was the Collector and that I should accept without fuss. But as I was standing there as Rishyendramani, I refused to be touched by the man. Meanwhile, there were claps and noises from the audience asking the Collector to hand over the medal and return to his seat. He gave it to me and went back disappointed.

"The President of Cuddapah District Board was Smt. Rama

Subbamma during those days. She came to the school on the next day. "It is due to Rishyendramani," she said, "that the school could raise so much money for constructing its building. We want to honour her and have brought an expensive saree as a gift for her." She called out for Rishyendramani and requested her to come onto the stage. From where from could she come? As the audience eagerly awaiting the great dancer, I came running. I was wearing shorts. The guard stopped me. Then our headmaster intervened and told him, "Yesterday's Rishyendramani is really this boy. Let him come in." Everyone was puzzled, on seeing Me. Smt. Rama Subbamma lifted Me up into her arms, kissed Me and said, "My dear child, you are so tender in age but have brought great honour to us. I am proud that there are talented persons like You in our country." She was all praise for Me. Ever since, she showed great love for Swami. Wherever she went, she would narrate tales of Swami's glory. This is how Swami gave a dance programme that day in the high school in Uravakonda.

The whole universe is a stage for the Supreme Being. Ever since that day, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai has been assuming countless forms and fascinating the world with His melodious music and divine dance.

THE STING OF A SCORPION

On 8th March 1940, a momentous event took place in Uravakonda. Sathyam was stung by a big black scorpion. His body lost sensation; he sank into unconsciousness. The news spread like wildfire and agitated many people. In that region, a sting of a scorpion often meant death. Sathyam was administered several injections and medicines but none

availed. Slowly, he recovered in a couple of days, got up on his own and began to move about. But he seemed to have undergone a total transformation, both mentally and physically. It was as though a spiritual spark dormant in his inner being suddenly came to life and began to glow. The effulgence of the Supreme Being comes only after the darkest period. The Lord of Shirdi was about to unveil and display in sharp relief, the immense body of his own spiritual powers through the medium of this boy. Sathyam was often seen lost in his own thoughts; he recited Sanskrit slokas, sang songs and gave religious discourses. His behaviour was strange and inscrutable. Seshama Raju and his parents were deeply concerned and confused.

Years later, somebody gave a speech in the presence of Baba. He said, "Swami was stung by a scorpion. That is the reason why he acquired spiritual powers from that day." Baba who spoke after him, stated, "The person who spoke before Me said that Swami obtained spiritual powers because of a scorpion sting. Let him be stung by a hundred scorpions. Let us see whether it would bring any spiritual powers to him." There is no doubt that the incident of the scorpion sting is merely a turning point in Swami's life. It cannot be the cause of His divine powers; it merely marks the stage of His Sankalpam (Will) to unveil His divinity.

THE BESTOWER OF KNOWLEDGE

Going back to the happenings in Uravakonda, one day, Sathyam appeared deeply lost in himself. Suddenly, he said, "Narayana Sastry next door is reciting the stanzas in the Sri Maha Bhagavath but is committing many mistakes in his exposition. Send for him." Some persons went to the learned

man and requested him to come and see Sathyam. Disdainfully, Sastry said, "Ah, he is but a mere boy. Is he finding fault with my learning? What does he know?" He did not bother to come. But Sathyam insisted. This time, the intermediaries could persuade the old man to come into Sathyam's presence. The boy explained to him all the errors he had committed. He also put to him some questions on the puranas (sacred scriptures). The scholarly Sastry admitted his lapses and acknowledged the corrections made by Sathyam. Astounded at the young boy's brilliance and erudition, Sastry prostrated himself at his feet.

Even now, occasionally, Bhagavan finds scholars whose quest for the Supreme Reality consists merely of profound study of scriptures, sacred texts and manthras. They devote a lot of their time to scholarly exposition of their deep learning. But in their single-minded dedication to learning, they fail to recognize that the very Supreme Being they are aspiring to reach through scholarship, the very object of their studies, is present right in front of them in human form. Scales of intensive learning prevent their eyes from visualizing the Ultimate Reality in the person near at hand, in flesh and blood. Looking far, they miss what is close by. Bhagavan grants such persons proper insight what they are in need of.

In this context, it is relevant to recall an interesting incident that reveals Bhagavan's profound knowledge of scriptures. A yajna was performed during the Dussehra festivities some years back. Elaborate arrangements were made and a special dais was erected for the purpose. Eminent scholars of the Vedas and other scriptures were in attendance. Some of them had no faith in Baba's divinity. They had not yet

acquired sincere love and devotion for Him. Probably because of that casual and irreverent attitude, a lapse occurred. One of the scholars, who was reciting a sacred manthra, committed a mistake in pronunciation. Instead of correcting himself promptly, the scholar went ahead thinking perhaps, that his lapse went un-noticed. Bhagavan turned towards him, looked at him seriously for a moment and sternly said, "Sastry, chant it again properly!" The scholar trembled as if he was lashed. Then Swami started reciting that manthra with impeccable intonation. The assembled scholars were astonished and joined Swami in reciting the manthra with proper intonation.

FORBEARANCE

As Sathyam's fame spread, people from far and near began flocking to Uravakonda to meet the amazing boy. Tongues wagged. Some said that he was a victim of some evil spell (black magic); that he was possessed by a vile spirit; that he was controlled by a demon; and that a tantrik or witchcraft might cure him. The distraught Seshama Raju brought in a worshipper of Goddess Sakthi to help. Sathyam chastised him, "You are worshiping Me every day. You are seeking My blessings daily. So how dare you now come to give me treatment? Bow to My feet with reverence and depart like a good boy!" The poor man got frightened, saluted Sathyam and left.

Sathyam was brought back from Uravakonda to Puttaparthi by his parents. He was shown to well-known doctors of Bellary and Dharmavaram. None of them could diagnose his problem. Now and then, Sathyam would suddenly cry out, "There! Devathas (celestial beings) are coming. Offer Aarathi

(sacred lighting of lamps and camphor as a mark of devotion)." Such utterances used to puzzle and distress members of his household. They were told of a reputed exorcist near the town of Kadiri who could drive away even the vilest and the most intractable evil spirit. Peda Venkama Raju decided to take Sathyam to him. Together with his daughters, Seshama Raju and Sathyam, Peda Venkama Raju travelled there in a bullock cart. The exorcist had a dreadful mien and fiery eyes. He subjected the fourteen-year-old boy to crude procedures and cruel corporal punishment. He gashed the victim's shaven head with a razor at several places. While blood flowed in streams, he poured lemon juice and onion juice into the wounds. He rubbed an ointment in his eyes, which is notorious for causing unbearable smarting. He poured 101 pots of water on the bloodied and burning head. The inhuman torture, which Sathyam silently bore with fortitude and forbearance, shocked his unfortunate and helpless family members. They felt shaken and remorseful.

The exorcist grew wilder because he believed that the devilish spirit that possessed Sathyam was unyielding. Unable to bear their mental agony at having surrendered their dear child to such inhuman torture, the family begged the tormentor to give the boy some respite. They pleaded that after he recovered somewhat, he would be brought back for further treatment. Sathyam was thus rescued from further torture at the hands of the exorcist.

Years later, a Haridas was rendering Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's life in His very presence. As he reached this particular episode of Swami's bodily torture at the hands of a heartless brute, Swami intervened, "Those details are too painful even

to hear. Skip over them, Bangaru!" Sometime later, Sri Kasturi asked, "Swami, You found it so painful even to hear of those sufferings. Why did You agree at all to undergo such inhuman treatment at that time?" The reply of Bhagavan Sai is very revealing. He explained, "Whatever be the suffering this body is put to, it will not affect Me. I transcend happiness and sorrow of every kind. I wanted to demonstrate these aspects of Mine to the world. That is why I endured all those tortures with patience and forbearance. I invited that punishment willingly, because My suffering would convince people of My spirituality; they would develop trust and faith in Me and set foot in the rewarding realm of devotion to God (Bhakti)."

There was a lawyer in the town of Penugonda called Krishnamacharyulu. He came down to Puttaparthi to see Sathyam and concluded that his condition was much more serious than he had imagined. He advised Sathyam's elders to take him to the temple town of Ghatikachalam. He felt that darshan of Lord Narasimha Swami (the man-lion avathar of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu), the presiding deity there, would cure Sathyam. On hearing the words of the lawyer, Sathyam smiled and asked him, "Sir, I am the presiding deity at Ghatikachalam. Are you advising that I should be taken for my own darshan?"

"I AM SAI BABA"

It was now **23rd May 1940.** Sathyam was sitting in the front portico of his home in Puttaparthi materializing sugarcandy and flowers and distributing them to one and all. The scene was one of merriment and delight. Some went to Peda Venkama Raju and invited him to come and enjoy the wonderful spectacle. The poor father could not tolerate what he thought was his son's cheap trickery or sleight of hand. He picked up a stout stick and marched to Sathyam and demanded, "Who are you? Tell me. Are you god or an evil spirit?" Sathyam looked at his father. He was perfectly serene. Calmly but clearly and firmly, he said, *"I am Sai*

Baba! I am of Aapasthamba Soothra and of Bharadwajasa Gothra. I have come to rescue all of you, smitten as you are with fear and lack of mental equanimity. Your ancestor, Venka-Avadhootha, prayed to Me to take birth in your family. In response to his prayers, I have incarnated!" Peda Venkama Raju was thunder-struck. He did not notice that the big stick in his hand slipped to the floor.

Why did his father, Peda Venkama Raju, become so overcome and speechless in a moment? Why did he undergo such immediate transformation at the mention of the great Avadhootha's name?

The house of Kondama Raju, father of Peda Venkama Raju, used to be visited often by a great person called Venka-Avadhootha. He wore a perpetual smile on his face. He was a picture of spiritual equanimity and bliss. The clothes he wore would wear out and be reduced to shreds on his body but he never cared. If he placed his palm on any person's head, that person would taste profound spiritual experience. Nobody knew where he stayed, when he would come and where he would go. He was a Sanyasi (renunciate) in every sense of the term; he was just like a piece of wood floating free in a stream of water. Such realized, noble persons who have attained supreme levels of renunciation and non-involvement are known as Avadhoothas. In the learned opinion of those familiar with sublime realms of knowledge, Venka-Avadhootha was the same as Venkusa, who had fostered Shirdi Sai in his childhood. The Avadhootha used to spend time now and then with Kondama Raju discussing spiritual matters.

One day, both of them sat conversing in a banana plantation. All of a sudden, Venka- Avadhootha fell silent. Kondama Raju enquired why he so abruptly became silent. The reply was, "Kondama Raju, Mother Earth is weeping. Don't you hear her sobs?" Kondama Raju stared in disbelief. Venka-Avadhootha went on, "Very soon, the Supreme Being, will incarnate Himself on earth in human form! You are destined to witness that incarnation!" He repeated the words a couple of times. He asked Kondama Raju to place his hand in his own and assert that he earnestly believed the extraordinary prediction. Sometime later, Venka-Avadhootha left his physical body.

Now, Peda Venkama Raju heard his son mentioning the glorious name of the great ancestral saint. Like a flash, he remembered the closeness of that divine person with this family, and also his fantastic prediction about the coming incarnation! When details of what happened reached the ears of the aged Kondama Raju, his eyes swam in tears of happiness. But then, there was a small hitch. None of them who were present there and heard Sathyam speak knew who Sai Baba was. Who was he?

Peda Venkama Raju heard that a government official had arrived at Penugonda on transfer in his job and also that he daily worshipped a fakir called Sai Baba. So, one day, he took his son to him. That gentleman saw the boy and declared that he was suffering from some brain disorder and needed to be admitted into a hospital for proper treatment. On hearing his advice, Sathyam asked him, "Whose brain is ill, yours or mine? You daily worship this very Sai present right before you in flesh and blood, but fail to recognize Him as you have no brain." He asked him to hold his hands; and

waving his hand, materialized heaps of Vibhuti and poured it into his hand. He also threw it all over the terrified man's residence.

On a Thursday, one of the persons gathered around Sathyam asked for some proof that he was Sai Baba. Sathyam asked him whether he did indeed need proof. Then he called for jasmine flowers. Taking them in his hands, he flung them onto the floor. To the astonishment of everyone, the flowers arranged themselves to read "Sai Baba" in the Telugu script. All doubts melted away.

THE GREAT ANNUNCIATION

It was now Monday, **20th October 1940**. Sathyam was then in Uravakonda having resumed his interrupted schooling. He was on his way to school, when suddenly, he turned back, returned home, flung his books away and cried out loudly, "I no longer belong to you. Maya (delusion) has left Me. My devotees are eagerly calling Me." On hearing these loud words, his sister-in-law looked out of her kitchen window. She saw a halo of blinding luminescence around Sathyam's head. "I am leaving," he told her, "the work I have come here for has to be initiated." As he said these words, his brother, Seshama Raju, and the neighbour, Narayana Sastry, arrived on the scene. On seeing the splendorous halo, Sastry fell at the feet of Sathyam. Seshama Raju stood speechless and motionless.

Glorious with the crown of effulgent light, Sathyam walked to a nearby large garden belonging to Anjaneyulu, an Inspector of Excise. He sat on a boulder there. Several eager devotees sat around him. Sathyam began singing a bhajan song, the first in the vast body of bhajan songs, which are now resounding all over the world!

"Manase Bhajare Guru Charanam,
Dusthara Bhava Sagara Tharanam"

First, learn that you are in Bhava Sagara (ocean of worldly life); next, resolve on Tharanam (crossing it); then fix a Guru or any name and form of God, which appeals to you. Then, dwell on His Glory; do bhajan, but do it with all your mind and concentration; sing in praise of the Master's Lotus Feet with all your heart; it enables you to cross the difficult-to-cross ocean of the birth-death cycle.

Devotees forgot themselves as they sang in tune with him. Some lighted joss sticks. Others garlanded Sathyam. A photographer turned up and prepared to photograph him. A small rock stood in front of Sathyam intruding into the picture and the cameraman desired it to be removed. Sathyam said,"Let it be. Go ahead and take your photograph." When the film was eventually developed and printed, that small stone was seen to the astonishment of every one, as Shirdi Sai Baba's form.

REFERENCES TO BHAGAVAN SATHYA SAI BABA IN ANCIENT TREATISES

Dr E.V.V. Sastry, a member of the Astrological Research Society of India, studied several Nadi treatises written thousands of years ago by various sages, and discovered therein many stunning references to Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba, which he published. Some excerpts are given here.

- Agasthya Nadi says, "Sathya Sai Baba will heal diseases of people with lightning speed. By His mere will, He will bestow health. Many educational institutions will be established by Him, He will publish numerous books on spiritual subjects. He will develop spirituality in humanity. To establish Dharma and to resuscitate Dharma, will constitute the principal features of His mission. In His earlier incarnation, he would be Shirdi Sai Baba. He will be the embodiment of kindness and compassion. He is the Father of the Universe! He will be an all-merciful Avathar of God, preceptor, protector and Father of the world..."

- Budha Nadi records, "Baba will be eternally immersed in Anandam (Bliss)!"

- Shukra Nadi says, "His residence will be called Prashanti Nilayam. By emphasizing the principles of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema. He will establish and spread peace all through the world. He always delights in serving humanity. He will possess all powers and siddhis. The person of divine aspects would be previously Shirdi-vasi (resident of Shirdi). He is Sankalpa-Siddha (whatever He wills, happens)... He will be in Nirvikalpa Samadhi state... He is God Incarnate! He will derive immense joy in the service of mankind."

- Sri Chinnadurai consulted Brahma Nadi and found therein-precise references to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. "In His life, Thursdays will be sacred days. By the way He will live and act, He would create the illusion of being just an ordinary individual residing in Puttaparthi. He will bear the name of Narayana. He will be the incarnation of Siva- Shakthi; and the re-incarnation of Shirdi Sai. Born on the banks of the river Chithravathi in a tranquil environment, He will be the embodiment of Supreme Equanimity."

- In Padma Puran, authored by the great Rishi Parasara, it is written, "In the village named Parthi will be born a person called Sathyam. He will be 5 feet 3 inches high. He will act like a powerful magnet capable of drawing to Himself the whole world." Baba Himself informed devotees that Padma Puran was translated into English by an Englishman called Wilson. Baba also said that the complete copy of Jaimini Bharatham, which contains clear references to Sathya Sai, is in the possession of some spiritually elevated persons.

- In Vishnu Puran, it was mentioned that He will display great super human powers in establishing the New Age of Truth. His parents will be devotees of Lord Vishnu and will reside in a village worshipping the cowherd form of Sri Krishna.

- Sri Aurobindo was a great Yogi (Maha Yogi) and a great Rishi (Maharshi). He was immersed in intense spiritual Sadhana (practice of austerities) and meditation) at his ashram in Pondicherry between 1923 and 1926. He was praying that God should take birth in this world for the spiritual elevation of mankind. On 24th November, 1926, he emerged out of his Samadhi (Spiritual Trance) and announced, "Yesterday, God incarnated Himself on the earth. With His boundless divine powers, He will direct humanity's mind towards higher, nobler goals. In every heart, He will light a spiritual lamp. His Godly voice will ring in the ears of the whole of humanity." It is clear from the date of incarnation mentioned by Maharshi Aurobindo that he was referring to Sri Sathya Sai only.

- Prophet Mohammed's discourses were published in 25 volumes, seven centuries after his death. The collection of those volumes is named The Ocean of Light. Several symbolic features by which the coming Master of the World could be identified have been mentioned in the Volume 13, Mehedi Moud, meaning in Arabic 'the Great Teacher who was promised'. They are: "He will have very thick hair on His head. His forehead will be broad. He will have a birthmark on His cheek. His face will always look clean-shaven. He will wear only a pair of clothes. His dress will be of flaming red colour. The colour of His face will look sometimes like copper, sometimes golden, sometimes

brownish, and sometimes like the moon. His physical form will be small. His feet will be delicate, like those of a young girl. Right from the moment of His birth, He will carry all knowledge in His head. So also the entire corpus of the world's religions and precepts will be in Him right from His birth. He can grant whatever one prays to God for. All the riches of the world will lie at His feet. He will go amidst his devotees, move among them and touch their heads with his palm. Whosoever sets eyes on him will experience supreme bliss. He will take residence on a hill. He will live for 95 years. He will fill the world with peace and tranquility. This Lord of the World will produce His own forms (symbols) out of His own body and His mouth..." In this manner, as many as 27 references have been made which clearly and unmistakably apply to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai.

- Nostradamus, the French futurist of the 16th Century, wrote a book called "Centuries" in which he wrote, the coming ruler of the world will appear in Asia... The triplicity of waters will give birth to Him. He will consider Thursdays as sacred. All the countries of the world will wonder at, and admire Him for his boundless wisdom and powers. From all parts of the world, people will come to honour Him.

- The Book of Revelations in the Bible describes the advent of the great Master. An angel appears before John and reveals, "... Behold a white horse; and He that sat upon it was called Faithful and True... His eyes were as a flame of fire and on His head are many crowns... He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood... and His name is called the Word of God... Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword..."

The Embodiment of Compassion and Love, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has been so described in numerous religious treatises.

A hundred salutations to His Lotus Feet!

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 4
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

DAY 3 : SATURDAY

CHAPTER 5 - RESURRECTION OF DHARMA

Whenever there is a languishing of Dharma... I create Myself for it is part of My primal resolution or Sankalpa to protect the spiritual structure of the universe. I lay aside My formless essence and assume a name and a form suited to the purpose for which I come. Whenever evil threats to vanquish good, I have to come and save it from decline. - Baba

REVITALISATION OF TEMPLES

BADARINATH

Bhagavan has often proclaimed that one of the important purposes of his incarnation is the revitalization of the divine potency of deities in ancient temples. As a part of the programme, on 11th June 1961, Baba set out on a journey to the famous Badarinath temple situated in the Himalayas in Uttar Pradesh. He was accompanied by His parents as well as several devotees. Sri Boorgula Ramakrishna Rao, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, joined the pilgrims at Hardwar. Baba quipped with them, "Normally devotees go to Badari to see Lord Narayana there. You are going there in the company of Lord Narayana to see the idols installed in the temple." Baba described the spiritual glory of the Badarinath temple thus: "The great ascetic, Adi Sankaracharya, prayed to Lord Shiva and received from him five Lingams. He

installed them, one each in Badari (in Uttar Pradesh), in the Himalayas, Puri (in Orissa), Sringeri (in Karnataka), Dwaraka (in Gujarat) and Chidambaram (in Tamil Naidu)."

As nearly 200 devotees watched in fascination in the Badarinath temple, Baba waved His open hand and materialized a plate of gold that held a thousand-petalled golden lotus. He placed the golden lotus in another plate made of silver. By another movement of His hand, He produced a Lingam. He explained that it was "Nethra Lingam" installed underneath the idol of Lord Badarinath by Adi Sankara himself 1200 years ago. While the idol is visible to visitors and worshipped by them every day, the Lingam lay concealed ever since its installation. Only now was it brought to view by Baba for worship. Nethram in Sanskrit means eye. True to its name, the Nethra Lingam clearly showed a wide open eye. Baba placed it in the golden lotus. With another wave of His hand, He now produced a vessel of silver filled with the sacred waters of Gangothri, the place of origin of the holy river Ganga (the Ganges). Baba touched the bottom of the vessel with His finger and when He withdrew it, water began to fall on the Nethra Lingam (abhishekam). The touch of His finger apparently made a hole in the bottom of the vessel. When the abhishekam was over, Sri Sai Baba shook His hand; and gold and silver flowers flowed out and covered the Nethra Lingam as abhishekam of flowers. Lord Siva is reputed to be particularly fond of thummi flowers (these are white in colour and very, very tiny, roughly five millimeters long). When the temple priest mentioned this to Baba, He materialized a heap of fresh thummi flowers. The Nethra Lingam was now worshipped with those blossoms. Bhagavan revitalized the Nethra Lingam through this

worship and, with His miraculous powers, restored it to its original invisible place beneath the idol of Lord Badarinath.

On return to Puttaparthi, Baba addressed the devotees who could not make the trip to Badarinath. "Do not feel disappointed." He told them, "that you could not undertake the pilgrimage and missed out on the spiritual rewards thereof. Lord Sri Narayana is surely here beside you, with you, right in front of you. Have this Narayana's darshan to your heart's content. Why do you crave for the darshan of the idol form of Narayana situated at a far off place? Worship this living form of Narayana, who is right before your eyes at this very place, with devotion and dedication and attain spiritual bliss."

VARANASI

There is another ancient place of worship, which received similar grace, and re-infusion of spiritual efficacy at the

divine hands of Bhagavan. This time it was a trip to Varanasi on 2nd April 1961. Swami's parents and Sri Boorgula Ramakrishna Rao, then Governor of Uttar Pradesh, and others accompanied Him. On nearing the Lingam of Lord Visweswara (the master of the universe), Baba produced Kailasa Vibhuti in His usual way and applied it on the Lingam's face in three broad bands. He also materialized sandalwood paste and used it to decorate the Lingam with a broad circular dot in the centre of the vibhuti bands. Then He created a golden ornament resplendent with three circles of glittering diamonds, rubies and emeralds. He placed it in the midst of the dot of sandalwood paste. In the wink of an eye, the piece remained stuck there firmly. Lord Viswanatha, the Lord of Varanasi, looked all the more glorious!

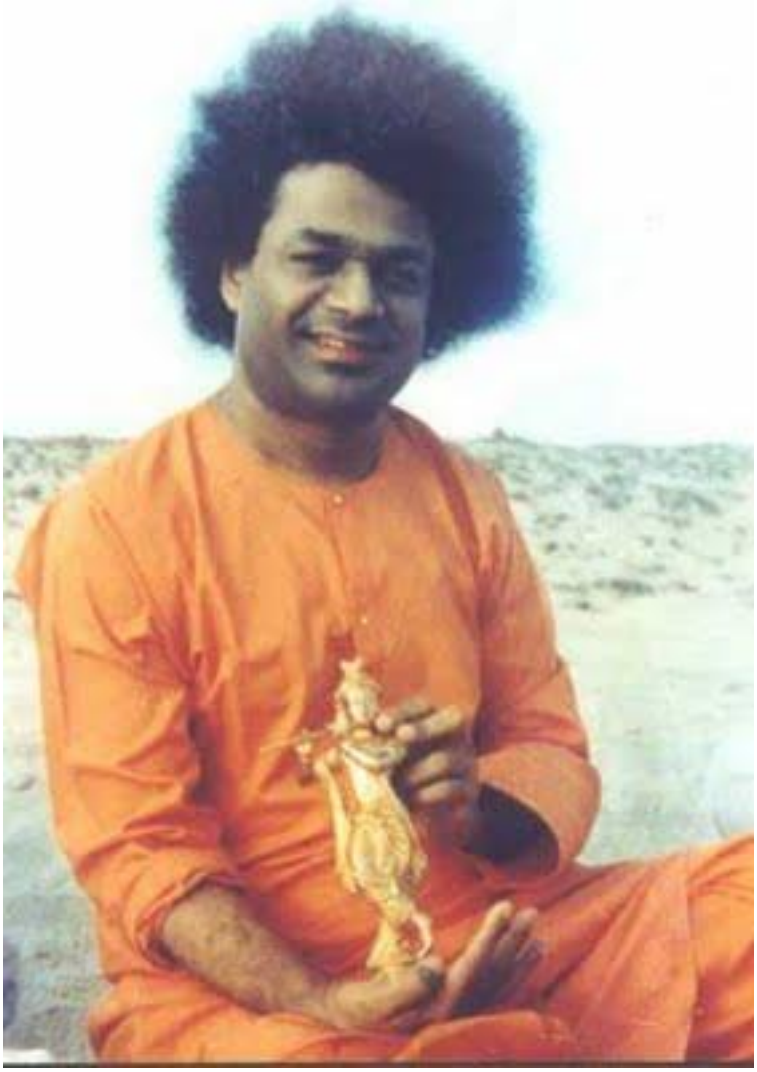
SOMANATH

On the invitation of the Rajamatha (Maharani) of Jamnagar, Baba visited the Somanath temple in Gujarat. 'Soma' means: SA + UMA, i.e., Lord Siva, together with His consort, Uma,

also known as Parvathi. It is well known in history that King Mohammed of Ghazni invaded India several times. He ransacked this rich temple time and again and carried away huge hoards of jewellery of gold and diamonds. On the last raid, he uprooted the majestic Siva lingam and looted the large quantities of precious stones embedded underneath the deity. In place of the original Lingam thus desecrated, the temple priests installed a new stone Lingam, and ever since carried on the prescribed sacred services to the newly anointed deity.

Digvijaya Sahed, the Maharaja of Jamnagar, was keen to restore the temple to its pristine glory. It entailed expense of enormous labour as well as resources. Despite these problems, he persisted with his mission and finally crowned the beauty of the temple by erecting a mighty tower. Named Digvijaya Gopuram (temple tower), it was inaugurated by Bhagavan Sai Baba. Entering the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, He materialized golden bilva leaves (bilva leaves are considered to be particularly dear to Lord Siva) and showered them on the four-feet high Lingam as abhishekam. By His Divine Will, He brought out the Lingam into His hands and showed it to the gathering. It was shimmering bright like lightning. After revitalizing it with His divine touch, He did not return it to its earlier invisible abode as He had done in Badarinath. Instead, He declared, "From now on, this temple shall ever remain free from any attack. No despoiler from any quarter shall lay his evil hand on this temple. There is no danger to it anymore. I am therefore making this Lingam freely available for public darshan and worship by devotees." He then materialized a silver peetham (pedestal) and installed the Lingam thereon.

DWARAKA



During that trip, Baba and the attendant devotees reached Dwaraka, the abode of Lord Krishna. Swami made His way into the temple precincts and sanctified them with the touch of His divine feet. Lord "Sai Krishna" of the present age gave darshan to the thousands of people gathered. He then proceeded to the seashore followed by devotees. Asking them to sit around Him on the sands, He made a small mound of sand, inserted His hand into it and pulled out a golden figure of Lord Krishna. "This wondrous even has made the Dwaraka temple replete with divine potency", declared Bhagavan Sai Baba.

SRISAILAM

Another ancient temple that attained spiritual rejuvenation at the divine touch of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the temple of Lord Mallikarjuna (Lord Siva) in Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh. Bhagavan visited this temple on 5th January 1963. As at the Somanath temple, here too, Baba entered the sanctum sanctorum, produced golden bilva leaves and golden thummi flowers and showered them on Lord Mallikarjuna in abhishekam.

PANDHARPUR

On 13th June 1965, Baba visited Pandharpur in Maharashtra where Lord Krishna is worshipped as Panduranga Vitthal. As He entered the inner sanctum and had darshan of Lord Panduranga and his consort, Rukmini Devi, He created an opal gem-set necklace and adorned the neck of the Goddess. These are occasions when Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba visited important places of worship and recharged and revitalized the spiritual potency of the presiding deities. Every temple is after all, the sacred abode of Swami Himself. Human body is but the seat of God; it is a temple in itself. The possessor of the human body is truly God. Every human being should ponder over the inner meaning and significance of the form and structure of the temple.

RESUSCITATION OF VEDIC DHARMA

A few months after returning from Badarinath, Bhagavan decided that a yajna should be performed at Prashanti Nilayam. At his instructions, several Vedic scholars from northern India and also from the area of Konaseema in Andhra Pradesh gathered at Puttaparthi. Baba gave directions for the performance of the Yajna strictly in accordance with Vedic structures. Baba announced, "As a part of the mission of My incarnation, I am laying the foundation for the proper care of the cow and the Brahmin, for the sustenance of the Vedas and, through them, for the resuscitation of Vedic Dharma itself."

The planned yajna, for which hectic preparations were soon underway was named "Veda Purusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna". The proceedings were spread over seven days (sapthaha) synchronising with the Dussehra festivities in October 1961. Veda Purusha, the presiding deity, was Baba Himself. Distinguished scholars of the Vedas and the Vedic rituals were in charge of the various activities. Veda Samrat Brahma Sri Cherukumilli Kamavadhanulu was the over-all supervisor (sarva-adhyaksha). Aamnaya Artha Vachaspathi Brahma Sri Uppuloori Ganapathi Sastry was to preside over the seminar meetings to be held on Vedas and other spiritual and theological subjects. Eminent scholars and Ghanapatthis, Sri Bulusu Appana Sastry, Sri Kadiyala Seetharama Sastry, Sri Kuppa Bairagi Sastry, Shri Vemparala Suryanarayana Sastry, Shri Kompella Ammanna Sastry and Shri Hotha Venkatarama Sastry participated in that glorious ritual. It was truly a galaxy of the brightest hue in the firmament of Vedic dharma. The proceedings comprised

Parthiva Sivalinga Archana, Manthra Japam, Parayanam of the holy texts of Ramayanam, Sri Maha Bhagavath, Devi Bhagavatham, Sree Bhashyam and others; and also Surya Namaskarams and Nava Graha Japams. Parayanam of the Rig, Yajur and Sama Vedas was a veritable feast to the ears of the devotees. And to crown it all, the Athi Rudra Yaga was performed with utmost attention to the minutest detail of the prescribed ritual.

The entire seven-day proceedings were immensely satiating and spiritually rewarding to the vast concourse.

On the concluding day, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave a discourse. Very significantly, He addressed the assembly: "Athma Swaroopulara! (Oh Embodiments of the Self!)" He went on, "The purpose of My incarnation is to establish dharma and thereby secure peace and equanimity and happiness to all people in every land. My Sankalp knows no going back. Nobody can resist the onward march of My mission. It is bound to triumph. This is certain, absolutely certain!

"In My earlier incarnation, I had made it clear that any and every Yajna performed for fulfilling narrow personal desires doesn't result in true well-being; only Jnana Yajna, which aims at promotion of universal well-being, is the best Yajna. Yajna stands for sacrifice (thyaga). Thyaga can only be selflessness.

"The Vedas prescribe that Yajna should be performed with a view to obtaining grace of the gods. Materials like ghee and other edibles are to be offered, as the Vedas lay down, to

gods through Agni, the God of Fire. Agni passes them on to the gods they are intended for. Small-minded persons may well doubt this, 'Is it true? Can such a thing be possible?' We go to the local post office and send money to specified individuals. The money is indeed reaching them, be they residents near or far away. Then why doubt the Vedic assertion? The gods are pleased and satisfied and give us timely rain. Crops flourish and give us food. Food gives life and sustains it. Thus, Yajna is at the very root of universal well-being.

"Yajna originates in Karma. Karma takes its birth from Brahman. Brahman is in the form of Akshara Purusha. Pranavam is the very form of that Akshara. And Pranavam is at the root of the Vedas. That is why it has been laid down that a Yajna, which is performed and directed in My name and My form, is the most suitable one for humans. Those who have partaken of the fruits (prasadam) of this Yajna will be ever content and happy in their worldly life; and when they depart this world attain merger with the Supreme Divinity Principle. There is absolutely no doubt about it."
On a different occasion, while speaking during the celebrations of a yajna, Bhagavan said, "Ages ago, people forgot the noble principles of sacrifice, selflessness and loving service. Evil tendencies like greed, avarice and selfishness flourished. The Vedas assumed the form of a black deer and ran away into the dense reaches of a forest. The great rishis and Vedic scholars went in search of it but all their efforts failed. They could retrieve only its skin. In remembrance of that incident, while performing yajna as prescribed in the Vedas, the rithwiks (priests engaged in offering oblations to the accompaniment of incantations)

even today don black-deer skin and sit on a similar skin while offering oblations to Agni. To the outward eye, it is just a piece of skin (charmam). But viewed from the angle of Yajna, it is sharmam, which means happiness and spiritual bliss. Those who take active part in the performance of the yajna experience bliss themselves and also spread bliss to the whole world.

"The ultimate goal of any Yajna performed in Prashanti Nilayam is sacrifice; in other words, spiritual bliss which takes shape out of total renunciation of the fruits of Karma. Such Yajna is not meant to benefit merely any single individual or country. Its purpose is to bring about universal well-being."

At the conclusion of every Yajna and after the final rite of valedictory offering (i.e., Pooma Aahuthi, offering to Agni whatever materials remain out of what had been initially collected for the Yajna), Swami personally sprinkled the holy waters of the ritual onto the thousands of people present at the venue, thereby bestowing on them spiritual absolution.

WHO ELSE KNOWS THE RIGHT MUHOORTHAM

Apart from renowned Vedic scholars and experts in Vedic rituals, those proficient in chanting Vedic manthras with proper intonation and accuracy, were in charge of the Jnana Yajna. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba fixed the muhoortham (auspicious moment for commencement of the holy programme) as 9.30am on 1st October 1961. The scholars made their own calculations with reference to the planetary positions and astronomy and decided that 7.30 am would be the most appropriate time for entering the Yaga Shala

(venue for the yajnam) and commencing the proceedings. When they placed their opinion before Swami, he said, "I think 9.30am would be the most auspicious moment. Give it a little more thought." Among the scholars entrusted with the task were Sri Varanasi Subrahmanya Sastry, Sri Cherukumilli Kamavadhani and Sri Kuppa Bairagi Sastry, who were the only ones aware of the Sai Spirituality. Whatever that might be, the scholars informed Swami again that 7.30am would be the most appropriate time. Swami agreed. Did they notice a twinkle in his eyes and a smile on his lips?

On the appointed day, the rithwiks and Vedic savants had their ritual bath in the river Chithravathi and completed their sandhaya vandanam, (morning prayers to the Sun God) by 6.30am. Clad in the silk clothes presented by Swami and holding silver vessels filled with holy water, they started for the Yaga shala exactly at 7am, so as to reach the yaga shala at 7.30am sharp. Suddenly, the skies opened up. There was torrential rain accompanied by thunder and lightning. The downpour continued without respite till 9am. The river Chithravathi was in flood and the group of priests got stuck up there. Although the muhoortham set by them had been washed away by rains and flood, they were happy to acknowledge Swami's all-knowing wisdom. The skies were clear and everything became normal by 9am.

As the auspicious muhoortham originally fixed by Him approached, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai made His way to the Yaga shala leading a horde of rithwiks reciting sacred Vedic hymns. Hundreds of devotees were heartily singing bhajan songs. Devotional instrumental music appropriate to the

splendid occasion was being played. Precisely at 9.30am, the muhoortham, which had been finalized by Him, Baba entered the venue and set in motion the proceedings of the weeklong yajna.

THE YAJNA KALASAM

A day or two before the Yajna was to commence; Swami summoned Brahma Sri Sivarama Bairagi Sastry who was to head the team of rithwiks. He told him, "The yajna should be performed with strict adherence to the prescribed tenets. As regards material, nothing should be wanting. Well before the yajna is to commence, carefully prepare a complete list of items required and give it to Me. I will see that everything is provided. Sri Sastry made out a long list in consultation with his fellow rithwiks. Whatever was listed was procured and placed at their disposal.

Nevertheless, just about five minutes before Swami was scheduled to leave for the yaga shala, Sri Bairagi Sastry suddenly recollected that the most important item, the yajna kalasam (the principal vessel which occupies pride of place in the proceedings), had been inadvertently omitted from his list of materials. But who would bring this serious mistake to Swami's notice at this late juncture? And how to tell Swami? He was in unbearable torment. There was no time to lose. He collected all courage, decided to take responsibility on his own unfortunate shoulders and informed Swami. He prayed to Swami to pardon him for his unpardonable lapse. Swami was his usual merciful self. With soft words of reassurance, He gently asked,"I had asked you to prepare the list carefully well before the Yajna. You have only five minutes now?" He

went into His room and within three minutes emerged with a silver kalsam in His hand. It displayed exquisite craftsmanship worthy of the great occasion and was adorned with images of several deities. Swami told the astonished Sastry, "During My incarnation as Shirdi Sai, I kept it in the palace of the Chincholi rulers. It was lying there in a room full of old and discarded pieces. I have just gone there, searched for it and brought it here, which has taken all this time. Now that this is conforming to the specifications laid down in scriptures, go ahead and commence the proceedings on time." Etched on that vessel were the initials "Sa. Ba." in Hindi indicating obviously that it had belonged to Sai Baba. Several years later, when he was giving a speech in the presence of Swami in the Auditorium, Sri Bairagi Sastry recounted this engrossing incident in detail.

AYUDHA POOJA

Traditionally, on the Vijaya Dasami day during the Dussehera celebrations, weapons of war are worshipped. It

is called Ayudha Pooja ('Ayudhya' means weapon). Baba says, "The six evil tendencies which envelop man's nature and act as hindrances to his spiritual progress, viz., kama (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (avarice, miserliness), moha (infactuation), mada (pride and arrogance) and mathsarya (jealousy), should also be likewise worshipped." But here, there is a subtle difference. Their worship consists of turning them towards God so that, instead of obstructing the aspirant's progress, they would actually help it. Thus, the very tendencies, which are ordinarily considered to be evil, are metamorphised into good. How can it be possible? Let us hear what Baba says:

"***Kama*** is intense, compulsive desire. Direct it towards God. It then changes into a craving to have darshan of the Lord, to win His favour, to obtain His Grace. Kama takes the shape of eagerness to reach God.

"***Krodha*** means anger. Turn it towards God and ask angrily, "Why has He not come to me? How long should I keep waiting? What fault have I committed? Why does He not bestow His Grace on me?" Hold it all against Him and persist with your impatience. Your anger is transformed into determination, a positive beneficial trait in your life.

"***Lobha*** means miserliness. When you turn it towards God, you begin to feel intense possessiveness. You feel, "He belongs to me and to me only." "He is my Lord and I belong to none else," your mind cries out; it intensely desires to get hold of God, to possess Him totally and exclusively. Lobha transmutes itself into intense craving for God; and helps one to hold on to Him with single-minded possessiveness.

"***Moha*** means infatuation, loss of one's sense of discrimination. When it is directed towards God, one feels that one cannot live without God; life in this world holds no charm, has no meaning any longer without the company of God. Then the mind refuses to hear to reason, cares for no one; it turns crazy in its longing for God. Moha transforms into blind and compulsive devotion to God.

"***Mada*** means pride coupled with arrogance. When you turn it towards God, you feel, "I have the support and grace of God; I have great clout; none can dare to cross my path; I fear nothing; How can God desert me?" Such thinking changes mada into faith and trust in God.

"***Mathsarya*** means jealousy. When it is directed towards God, you will feel, 'My God, my own Lord is being enticed away by somebody; he is distancing me'. Such thoughts make you agitated, and you find that your mathsarya is soon transformed into overpowering desire for closeness with God.

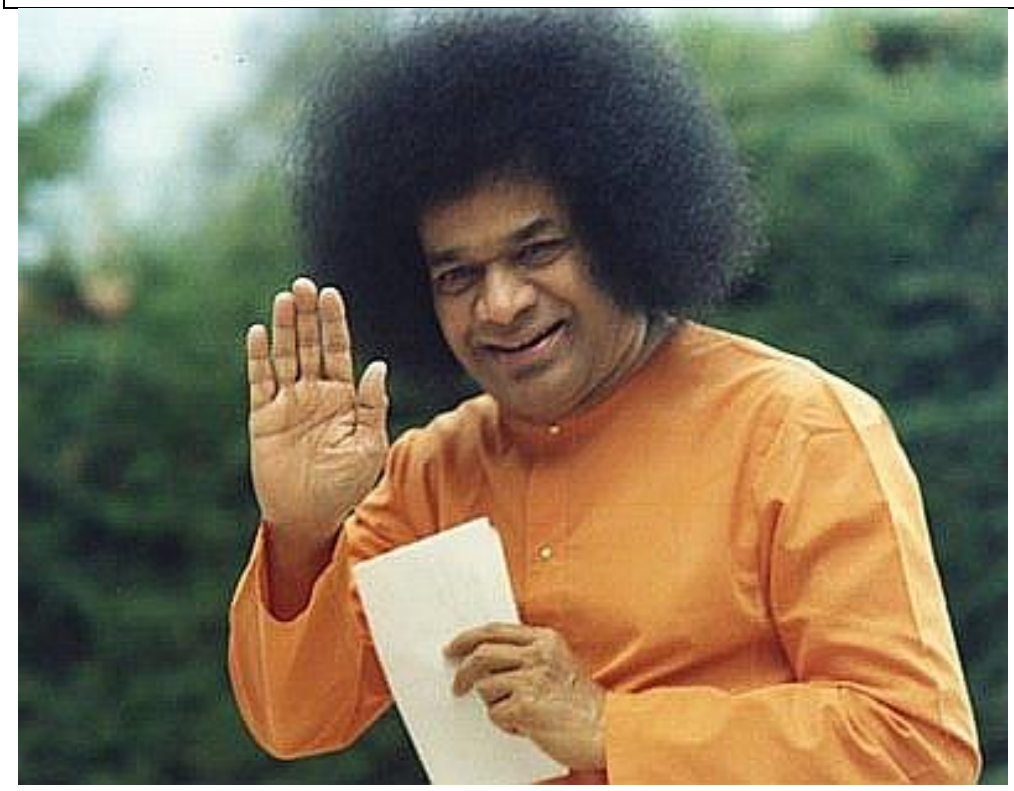
"Lions in a circus dutifully obey the ring-master. Similarly, if man's six evil tendencies are subordinated to their Master, they lose their natural wildness and become subdued. This is the true meaning and significance of Ayudhya Pooja."

Some of the devotees brought pearls, corals and gold to be offered as oblations in the Yajnagundam (ceremonial fire in which ritual offerings are made to Agni during yajna). Swami exhorted them, "Make offerings of your Gunas in the Yajnagundam. Those are the precious pearls and jewels you

will do well to give up." When performing yajna, one should aim at achieving a higher goal of elevating one's soul. That really is the glorious fruition of the arduous process of yajna.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 5
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 6 - THE SUPREME DIVINITY



This is the human form in which every divine entity, every divine principle, that is say, all the names and forms ascribed by man to God are manifest... You are very fortunate that you have a chance to experience the bliss of the vision of the Sarva Devata Swaroopa, now in this very life. - Baba

BABA TRANSCENDS EVERY OTHER GOD

The great rishi Garga was a learned scholar of astronomy. He was also the holy priest to the Yadava dynasty. He was the author of a Sanskrit treatise called Garga Samhitha. At the commencement of that work, he described the qualities and nature of a "full and complete incarnation (poorna avathar)":

"Yasmin Sarvani Thejamsi Vileenayam The Swa Thejasi, Tham Vadanthi pare Sakshath pari poornathamam

Swayam."

That incarnation of the Supreme, which encompasses within itself the divine glory of all the gods, is the full and complete incarnation. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba satisfies this description in all respects.

Pedda Bottu, ardent devotee of both Shirdi Sai and Sathya Sai, wrote a book called 'Sri Sathya Sai Vratha Kalpam' which describes the procedure of ritualistic worship of Bhagavan. She kept the finished manuscript safely in her box. When she opened the book one day, she found that numerous modifications and alterations had been made in it in red ink. They were all in the unmistakable hand of Bhagavan Himself. Wherever she had used the words, "Sarva Devatha Swaroopa", while referring to Swami (meaning, the embodied form of all gods), they were altered to read, "Sarva Devatha-atheetha Swaroopa" (meaning the form that transcends all gods). Centuries ago, when the Telugu saint-composer Pothana was translating the epic Sri Maha Bhagavatham from Sanskrit to Telugu, Lord Sri Rama himself, it is said, contributed to his text. In the same way, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba amplified Pedda Bottu's text in His own hand. Thereby, He proclaimed to the world, in writing, that He transcends every god.

To cite His own words, "This, My human form, embodies all dharmas (faiths) and divine powers (sakthis) of all gods. Never doubt this at all. If you install this divine form of Mine on the throne of your heart, with unshakable faith, you will be able to have a glimpse of

My pristine Universal Form. I will prove that every form, every attribute, which man cherishes and worships as pertaining only to God, belongs to the form of Sai only."

AS SRI MAHA GANAPATHI

Swami Amrithananda, disciple of the celebrated saint of Arunachalam, namely, Sri Ramana Maharshi, travelled from Arunachalam to Puttaparthi for Bhagavan Sri Sai's darshan. Bhagavan drew close to him and in a sweet voice addressed him, "Amritham!" Swami Amrithananda was thrilled. Ramana Maharshi, the great saint, used to address him exactly in the same manner, with the same affection and touch of intimacy. Sai Baba's call, he felt, was a leela with special significance. During conversation with the 85 year-old Amrithananda, Swami told him, "In your seventh year, you performed Ganapathi Homam (oblations in holy fire) continuously for 45 days. As you made offerings in the homa gundam, you recited a sacred manthra containing Beeja Aksharas (sacred and spiritually charged root-letters, sounds), 'Om', 'Sreem', 'Hreem', 'Kleem', and 'Gleem', at the rate of a thousand times every day. Are you aware what the scriptures say about the beneficial result of that yaga? It is said that if a devotee performs it on the prescribed lines, at the conclusion thereof, the elephant-headed Lord Maha Ganapathi emerges out of the homa gundam resplendent in his golden complexion and gives divine darshan and blessings to the devotee. Did you ever have such a darshan?" Amrithananda replied, "I was then only a boy of seven years. Could the divine darshan of Maha Ganapathi be obtained merely through offerings in the homa gundam?" Sri Sai Baba assured him, "It is only because of the result of that recitation of manthra and offerings made then, that you have come into My presence now at this advanced age. You shall receive the benefit of that homam right now. Scriptures never go wrong." Amrithananda was asked to look towards

Swami and as he did so, he saw, in the place of Bhagavan, Maha Ganapathi's glorious form with marvelous complexion.

AS SRI SUBRAHMANYA SWAMY

Lord Subrahmanya Swamy was the family deity of the Bhatt family of Mysore. In 1943, Mrs Bhatt was diagnosed to be suffering from cancer. Doctors advised a surgical operation but her mother-in-law did not agree. She insisted that as they were all ardent devotees of Lord Subrahmanya, the Lord would surely take care of the patient. For six long months, the family stuck to their intense and steady faith and continued with their daily worship. But the patient's condition was worsening. One night, she had a dream in which she saw a great serpent moving around her bed. Alarmed, she woke up her mother-in-law. Lights were switched on but found nothing. But after some time, the patient again dreamt of the same serpent, which, in a moment, changed to Lord Subrahmanya. He pierced her chest with His trident. Thus impaled, she was taken to the top of a mountain peak. She fell at the feet of the Lord who asked her whether she wished to remain there or to return to her family. She replied that she would prefer to go back to her husband and children. The Lord then told her, "You are fully healed. I will always be protecting you." She saw herself being returned to this world by a narrow, beautiful stairway. The dream was vivid and reassuring. From that day onwards, her health steadily improved and soon became normal. Even while she unfailingly did her daily worship, she found time also to serve the poor and the needy to the best of her ability.

Twenty years later, that lady and her husband went to

Puttaparthi and had the darshan of Sri Sathya Sai for the first time. Swami gave them an interview. He told her, "I spoke to you twenty years ago." She was taken aback and protested, "No, Swami. This is the first time I am seeing you." But Swami told her, "No, I came to you when you were in Mysore." He also mentioned the name of the street where they were staying in Mysore during her illness. She wondered. The name of the street was of course correct. But when did Swami come there? When did He speak to her? She had no recollection. Then, she noticed the staircase leading from the interview room to Swami's room located on the upper floor. She counted the steps. They were eighteen in number; they were narrow and beautiful. When did she see them before? She suddenly remembered to have seen them in her dream two decades ago. They were the same steps, which Lord Subrahmanya had returned her down to this world. In a moment, before she could recover from her wonderment, Swami waved His hand and materialized a beautiful figure of Lord Subrahmanya Swamy, adorned with ornaments of serpents and seated on a chariot. He placed that image in her grateful hands. She realized that the ever-merciful Sai Baba was the same as Lord Subrahmanya Swamy who was worshipped at their home every day. She washed Baba's Lotus Feet with her copious tears of exquisite happiness.

Lord Subrahmanya Swami stands today by the side of his elder brother, Maha Ganapathi, in Prashanti Nilayam. His idol was installed there by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on 21st September 1997.

AS LORD PARAMA SIVA

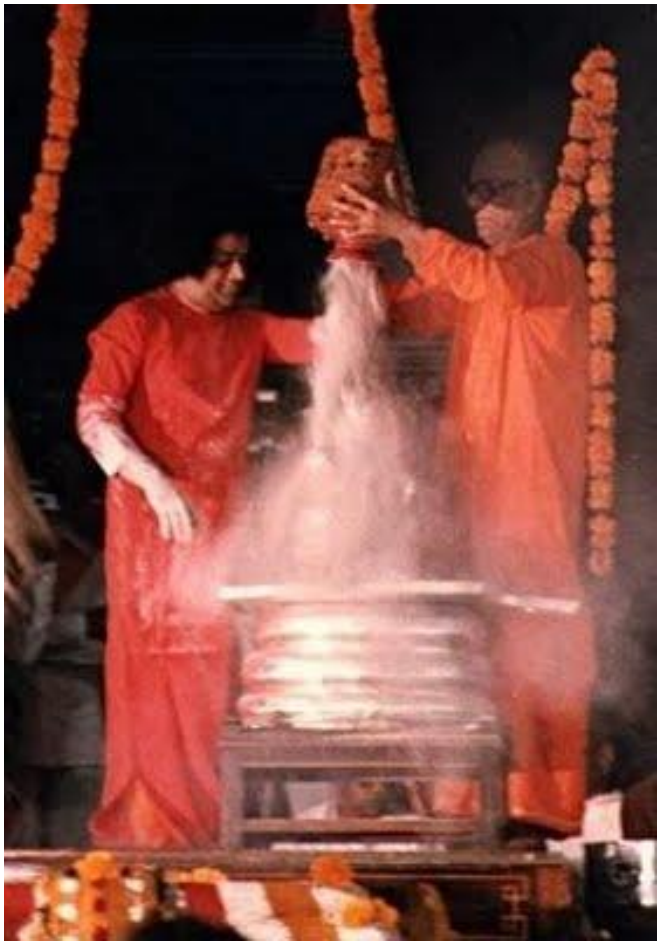
Rama Raju, the then Municipal Chairman of Bellary district, came to Uravakonda to meet Sathyam. In those days, Sathyam was also called Raju. Rama Raju told Seshama Raju, "We would like to have your Raju with us in Bellary during the next school vacation. You think your brother is just an ordinary boy. You are wrong. My heart is moved by his purity and the glow in his face. I can see a divine effulgence in him. Please bring him along and stay with us for some days." Those were the days when Seshama Raju was somewhat worried about his brother's unusual behaviour. He felt that a change of place might help to improve Sathyam's mental health. He accepted Rama Raju's invitation and went to Bellary.

One day, he organized a trip to Hampi (capital of the Vijayanagar empire of the yesteryears) to see the famous temple of Lord Viroopaksha (Siva). All of them went into the temple but Sathyam stayed out, pleading some discomfort in his stomach while the others entered it. When the temple priest was offering arathi to the presiding deity, the devotees saw the image of Sathyam in the sanctum sanctorum in place of the deity of Lord Viroopaksha. Seshama Raju was angry. He thought, 'Sathyam said that he would not enter the temple; but he has somehow sneaked in and taken the place of the Lord. This is blasphemous.' He went out in anger only to see Sathyam standing there under a tree. Seshama Raju was puzzled. While he stood outside keeping an eye on Sathyam, he deputed another person to go inside and verify things there. He was surprised when he was told that Sathyam was seen very much within the

temple even as he stood under the tree outside. As the saying goes,

"Anthar Bahischa Tath-Sarvam Vyapya Narayana Sthithah."

Lord Narayana is all pervasive, present both inside and outside, everywhere at the same time. Everyone in the group realized that this Sathya Narayana too was all pervasive, present everywhere at the same time, both inside and outside the temple! It is also noteworthy that by that time, Bhagavan had not yet proclaimed His avatharhood. The group came out of the temple in great exultation and looked at Sathyam's face. But they noticed nothing unusual in that face, as if nothing extra-ordinary had happened.



It is well-known that Swami is the creator of vibhuthi. He is seen every day materializing large quantities of it and distributing it among devotees. During festivities of Siva Rathri (marking Lord Siva's manifestation in the form of Lingam), Baba used to perform Abhishekam (ritual of pouring, ususally water) on Shirdi Baba's image using, instead of water, vibhuthi emanating out of an empty silver vessel. The vibhuthi would never run out!

A particular occasion deserves to be described. In the open ground close to Prashanti Mandir, in the centre of a dais called Santhi Vedika, a raised pedestal was set up. A four-feet high silver idol of Shirdi Sai was positioned on the pedestal. Sri Kasturi stood on one side of the idol and held an empty silver vessel upside down a little above the idol's head. On the other side stood Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai and inserted His right hand into the mouth of the inverted vessel in a churning motion. Vibhuthi poured out in huge quantities at every turn of the divine hand. It fell over the idol like a deluge. After a little while, Sri Sai Baba removed His right hand, inserted His left hand and brought forth a downpour of vibhuthi as he rotated His hand inside the vessel. He took turns, now with the right hand and then with the left one. The idol was soon covered fully with the vibhuthi. Devotees went into raptures of joy and incessant clapping.

Then Sri Sathya Sai wiped the head and face of Shirdi Sai with a piece of cloth. He materialized with a wave of His hand an emerald and placed it on the forehead of the idol. It stuck there. It was a breath-taking miracle. We have only to immerse ourselves in the glorious sight of such miracles, forget ourselves and become one with the divinity, that we

are blessed to witness.

On that Siva Rathri day, devotees saw Siva Lingam materializing in Baba's stomach and emerging out of His mouth. Sri Sathya Sai was giving His nectarine discourse and devotees were in rapt attention. Suddenly, Baba stopped speaking and sat down. Devotees started singing bhajan songs loudly. Sri Sai was sweating. He was frequently sipping water from a glass tumbler placed on His table. Some movements were noticed near His stomach. He was twisting and turning as if in pain. Singing of bhajans continued with greater and greater enthusiasm. The Athma Lingam began to move upwards from His stomach, reached the throat and suddenly emerged out of His mouth. Baba held the brilliant Lingam in His open palms held together, and held it up so that the thousands of devotees assembled there could see it. As the large Lingam emerged out of the mouth, the corners of His mouth split and there were stains of blood.

Bhagavan addressed the audience and explained the significance of the materialization of the Lingam, "You cannot comprehend the full nature of divinity. Nor can you measure divine power (Sakthi) and its glory. It is unreachable and unseen. This incident of the materialization of Lingam is a demonstration, brought within the limited scope of your comprehension of that divinity, which is present here right in your midst. You are privileged to witness this marvellous spectacle because of divine grace and your good fortune."

In February 1974, on the occasion of Siva Rathri, Bhagavan materialized a Lingam from His mouth and made a

sensational pronouncement. Addressing the devotees, He said, "This is the Aathma Lingam of ten inches (dasha-angulam) as described by Sage Kapiladeva in the Vedas and the Upanishads. Your lives have attained fulfillment because you have seen this divine form. You are released from the cycle of universal birth and death. This Lingam measures ten inches around. You see a trident within the Lingam in the form of a flame, which changes its colour every ten minutes!"

After many long years, Bhagavan again materialized a Siva Lingam named Hiranyagarbha Lingam on the auspicious day of Siva Rathri in 1999. Again on the day of the Siva Rathri in the following year, Bhagavan Sathya Sai materialized from His mouth a golden Siva Lingam - Swarna Lingam, and showed it to the thousands of devotees assembled in the Sai Kulwant Hall, who went into raptures with joy. They felt that they were immensely blessed by the Lord.

AS LORD SRI RAMA

In 1972, training classes in summer were about to commence at Brindavan. Eight hundred devotees, boys and girls, selected from various regions of the country assembled at Whitefield. Swami's mother, Easwaramma, obtained His permission to join other women devotees at Brindavan for the thirty days of training. She was given accommodation on the floor below that of Swami.

The trainees woke up daily in the early hours. They went through the incantation of Omkar (Pranavam), devotional songs, yogasanas, bhajans, service to the poor and other activities. The participants were very enthusiastic and lively. For Easwaramma, all that was like a festive occasion every day in the temple of Goddess Saraswathi, the Goddess of Learning.

On the eleventh day of the training camp, Easwaramma experienced a thrilling experience. The next morning, she rushed to Pedda Bottu who was well known also as Shirdi Ma. She

was all excitement as she told Pedda Bottu, "I must inform you about a wonderful experience I had. But promise me that you would never tell anybody about it." Pedda Bottu moved closer to her and confidentially enquired what it was all about. Said Easwaramma, "Our Swami is truly God Himself! I have no doubt whatsoever." Pedda Bottu burst out laughing. Easwaramma asked what was so funny about what she said. Pedda Bottu reassured her, "No, no. I am not laughing at your words. I am only expressing my joy that this

fact has come to your knowledge at long last. But leave that alone, tell me how you have come to this realization." Easwaramma said, "You know I am having high fever for the last four days. Last night, Swami came to me." Pedda Bottu interrupted, "Was it in a dream?" "No", said Easwaramma, "I was not able to sleep and was uncomfortably rolling this side and that in bed. Swami came to me in person and enquired how I was feeling. I told Him that my body was aching all over. Now, how should I tell you, Pedda Bottu, He is not our usual Swami whom you and I see every day. In a moment, He became Lord Sri Rama, with a dazzling crown on His head and a long bow in His hand. He stood by my side. I was surprised but saluted Him. I also tried hard to get up and sit on the bed, even to get out of it, but could not do so. In a few moments, Lord Sri Rama became our familiar Swami. He smiled gently and gave me a little vibhuthi prasadam. He said, 'Fever will disappear. Don't worry,' and left." Pedda Bottu was happy and elated. She said, "Swami has certainly blessed you. What a memorable experience!" Easwaramma was in full wakefulness and consciousness when she saw Sri Sathya Sai as Lord Sri Rama. She is indeed exceptionally fortunate and blessed.

As subsequent events indicate, that divine experience she had was probably a pointer to the approaching merger of Easwaramma's soul with the Supreme Being. The very next day, 6th May 1972 at 6am, the trainees had just returned after completing nagara sankeerthan. Swami gave them darshan from the balcony of His residence and went in to have a bath. Meanwhile, Easwaramma had her bath, took her morning cup of coffee and sat down in the inner veranda to relax. Suddenly, she turned towards the bathroom and cried

out for Swami. "Swami! Swami!", she called and collapsed. Swami responded from inside the bathroom, "I am coming, coming!" That was all. She breathed her last.

On 6th May 1983, Swami spoke on the occasion of the death anniversary (vardhanthi) of Easwaramma. Referring to the special characteristics which distinguished the great lady, and the manner of her death, He said, "Usually, at such moments one's mind dwells on ornaments of gold or similar valuables. It is only to very few persons that Swami comes to mind at the final moment. From the floor down below, she cried out to for me, 'Swami! Swami!' I responded, 'I am coming, coming!' And she left. The situation is just like Maha Vishnu rushing to bless Gajendra in response to his desperate call for divine succour. As the two live wires meet like a flash, in a moment, one attains salvation. At the crucial moment, Easwaramma's daughter and grand daughter, Venkamma and Shailaja, were by her side. But she desperately cried out only for Swami. This is an ample proof of her piety and righteousness, the priceless reward for her great sadhana (practice of spiritual austerities). Here is an excellent example for emulation."

AS SRI SHYAM SUNDAR

Swami Karunyananda spent several years with Ramana Maharshi in Arunachalam. For some years, he was also with Malayala Swami in Gogarbham near Tirupathi. In 1927, he was ordained into sannyas (renunciation) by Sivananda Swami in Hrishikesh. He practiced many spiritual austerities. Later, he established the Gowthami Jeeva Karunya Sangham in Rajahmundry on the banks of the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh, and did great service to the

poor and the needy. As a result of his spiritual attainments and his services to humanity, he was rewarded with the good fortune of remaining in close proximity to Sri Sathya Sai.

Once Sri Sathya Sai Baba asked Karunyananda to come and sleep in His room. But being in the unfortunate habit of snoring, he hesitated to accept Baba's invitation. Swami told him not to worry about it but to come and sleep in His room. Karunyananda has since stated, "Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai never sleeps. He lies in bed on his left side. His eyes are always half open. He is fully aware of what is happening all around him." Bhagavan vouchsafed Karunyananda an unforgettable experience that night. Swami was lying on His bed. Karunyananda spread his bed on the floor and slept. After some time, he woke up and sat and looked towards Swami's bed. Surprisingly, in place of Swami, he found Bala Krishna (Krishna, the child) lying in Swami's bed emanating a charming bluish glow. Karunyananda lapped up the wonderful vision in astonishment. Unbelieving, he rubbed his eyes and looked again carefully. He also assured himself that he was wide awake and fully in possession of his senses. There was no question of any doubt. It certainly was Bala Krishna lying on Baba's bed. After a few moments, once again Baba was seen lying there in place of Bala Krishna! Karunyananda stated later, "What I witnessed was certainly not imagination. I was fully awake. It was Bala Krishna most certainly. I also witnessed Bala Krishna changing into Sri Sathya Sai. Bhagavan Sathya Sai does not publicly display his divinity. Perhaps he feels that such displays might lead to unmanageable crowds converging on Him from far and wide."

In Sai Sruthi, Swami's residence in Kodaikanal, Swami spoke

to His students once and revealed a divine secret. He said, "Lord Sriman Narayana has come down to this earth in human form as Sathya Sai. Please understand and accept this fact. Like Lord Sri Rama and Lord Sri Krishna, this too is a Poorna Avathar. Great sages and spiritual preceptors were sent here from time to time by the divya sakthi. But here you see the very incarnation of the Universal Absolute on earth."

AS GAUTAM BUDDHA

Once a conference of scientists took place in Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh under the chairmanship of Dr Bala Krishna. Prof Haikawa, a Japanese scientist was among them. Dr Bala Krishna invited him to his home. There, Dr Haikawa saw for the first time a coloured photograph of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He felt immediately drawn to it. In the temple-like house, this attractive photograph stood out in all its decorations. He thought that the picture might be of an honoured ancestor of the family. During their conversation, Dr Bala Krishna described the divinity of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and told him that Baba was God-incarnate.

It so happened that Swami was right there in Hyderabad at that time; and the two scientists went to have His darshan. Swami kindly invited both of them into the interview room. In the proximity of Swami, Prof Haikawa experienced an intense awareness that he was in the presence of a divine personality. Swami gently smiled at him, waved His hand, produced a human heart and showed it to him. He was bewildered. Bhagavan asked him what it was. Dr Haikawa replied that it was a human heart. "Do you know to whom did it belong?," asked Swami. He answered, "How do I know?" Bhagavan told him, "This is your own heart, at the

time of your birth!"

Dr Haikawa was stunned. Swami explained, "This is indeed your own heart. Do not be surprised. As soon as you were born, your heart stopped beating. You were as good as dead. Your body turned blue. Your father was a man of faith and a very devout person. He placed your body at My feet and prayed to Me, 'Oh God! I earnestly prayed to you for a child. Is this the way you respond to my prayers? Of what use is this dead body to me?' I therefore mended your heart and restored you to life."

As a matter of fact, the age of the Japanese scientist was more than Baba's. And it was to Lord Buddha that his father had prayed seeking revival of life in his dead son's body. The secret of that incident was known to no one except his parents. Dr Haikawa realized that Lord Buddha, who had lived many centuries ago, had now reincarnated in the form of Sai Bhagavan. During the conversation, Swami referred in lighter vein to Dr Haikawa as 'Avakaya,' which in Telugu means mango pickle.

AS JESUS CHRIST

A Roman Catholic couple from America happened to hear about Bhagavan and came down to Puttaparthi. During public audience in Prashanti Nilayam, they saw the glorious form of Sri Sathya Sai. They felt powerful spiritual waves being radiated to them. They were surprised and delighted as they experienced an intense glow of happiness. The man was overwhelmed by Baba's eyes, full of kindness, and heart replete with love. He was convinced that Jesus himself had come to earth in Sai's form and told his wife as much. The

woman did not however react favourably. "What nonsense!" she said, "We are Roman Catholics. It is not proper for you to say that this Hindu is Jesus himself. I do not agree with you at all on this." She remained somewhat aloof from Sri Sathya Sai.

One day, Swami invited the couple into the interview room. The man was undoubtedly in great exhilaration. His wife was somewhat cold and sat a little aside. As the interview drew to a close, the man asked Swami politely, "Swami! May I take a photograph?" Swami agreed and the gentleman took a few snaps with his camera. The film was developed and printed on their return home. What they saw was not Sathya Sai but the loving and compassionate figure of Jesus Christ! They were astonished. The woman felt extremely sorry that she could not recognize Jesus Christ when physically present in front of her in the form of Sri Sathya Sai. Needless to say, she became Swami's devotee from that moment.

A devotee asked Swami, "Jesus promised to come back again. Are you that Jesus?" Swami explained to him, "Jesus did not say that he would come back. What he actually said was that God who had sent him to earth Himself would come. He pointed to a sheep. The cry of a sheep sounds, 'Ba! Ba!' Jesus indicated that God would come to earth with that name. But his followers did not correctly comprehend what he had stated. It is I who sent Jesus to the earth!"

THE KABA IN BABA'S PALM

When Professor S Bashiruddin, a Muslim, visited Sri Sai Baba, Bhagavan materialized and presented to him a locket on which was inscribed "Allah" in Arabic. Allah in Arabic,

Sarva-antharyami, in Sanskrit and Omnipresent, in English - they all mean the same. Once some Arabic visitors met Sri Sai Baba in Prashanti Nilayam. It was the sacred day of Bakrid. Swami invited them into the interview room. He raised His open palm. The visitors saw in it a vision of thousands of devout Muslims praying on their knees before the holy Kaba in Saudi Arabia at that very moment.
These are some of the instances to establish that Sri Sathya Sai is not only the embodiment of all gods; he is the transcendental encapsulation of every god. Many persons belonging to the Jewish faith testify to this fact like Dr Samuel Sandweiss, who declared, "I am convinced that Baba is the incarnation of God. Whatever descriptions about God are given in the Hindu, Christian and Jewish lore and literature are not fictional or imaginary. They are all true. They all proclaim the truth that God has the supreme power to incarnate Himself as and when needed."

AS SRI DATTATREYA

On the Siva Rahtri day in 1978, Sai Baba was traveling by car from Ooty to Bangalore. Several devotees and students were accompanying Him in cars. Smt Ratanlal Bhatia, who cooked Baba's meals every day in Bangalore, was also among them. Sri Sathya Sai stopped the caravan at some place and got down from His car. All of them sat down to rest and relax and Baba began to speak to the gathering about some spiritual matters. He addressed a student, who He knew was still harbouring doubts and misgivings about Baba, "You are holding a Polaroid camera. Take My photograph and you will see My true identity."

Baba stood at a particular spot. The student took his position

with the camera and was about to take a snap. Suddenly, Smt Bhatia rushed forward and tried to straighten the creases on Baba's garment. Swami sternly ordered her to go away. As He spoke somewhat curtly and loudly, the poor lady was frightened, turned back and stood at a distance. The student clicked his camera. In a few moments, the Polaroid picture developed in sharp colours; it was of the divine composite form of Lord Dattatreya - with three heads : Lord Brahma, Lord Maha Vishnu and Lord Maheshwara. The photo also showed four dogs and a cow standing by the side of the Lord. When the picture was shown to Swami, he told Smt Bhatia, "Do you now realize why I firmly ordered you to go away at the moment this photograph was being taken? Extremely powerful radiations were emanating from Me at that time. You would not have been able to withstand their impact." Sathya Sai is the Supreme Being, the primordial source of the cycles of creation (srishti), maintenance (sthithi) and ultimate annihilation (layam). This truth has been demonstrated by Sathya Sai through this incident when He revealed Himself to be the transcendental divinity combining within Himself Lord Brahma, Maha Vishnu and Lord Maheshwara - the great trinity.

"MY HUMAN FORM ENCOMPASSES DIVINE SAKTHIS OF ALL GODS"

Sri Sathya Sai Baba once declared, "As I am moving among you, eating like you and conversing with you, you may mistake Me as a common human being. If you commit that error, you will get into trouble and get enmeshed in delusion. You must always be vigilant and avoid that danger. The web of maya (delusion) is my concomitant. So, I may

sing along with you, speak with you, participate together with you in all activities, and thereby create in you that maya. But at any moment, I may suddenly reveal My divinity. You must keep yourself alert, ever and always, and be ready for that great moment.

"This, My human form, encompasses every faith (Dharma) and every divine potency (Sakthi) of every god. Whatsoever be the names, forms and powers that man attributes to God, belong only to Sathya Sai and none else. And all prayers and offerings to God reach Me only. I can demonstrate it beyond doubt. That is why in all my discourses, I emphasize that Allah, Jesus, Jehovah, Rama, Krishna, Easwara and Sai are all names which pertain, without any difference whatsoever, only to Me.

"When God comes down to earth in human form, it is very difficult to see the reality of God in the outward form. Man compares the earthly, external appearance of the avathar with his own body and mistakenly concludes that the two are of the same level and type. To tell you the truth, even if the entire humanity makes concerted effort for a thousand years through the severest austerities, it cannot comprehend My true essentiality (nija tathwa). If you win the grace of this divine power standing right before you bearing a holy name and form, you will soon achieve supreme realization. You are exceptionally fortunate in having this rare opportunity. It is far more precious than what eminent sages, renunciates, yogis and holy men had ever got. Forget not this fact."

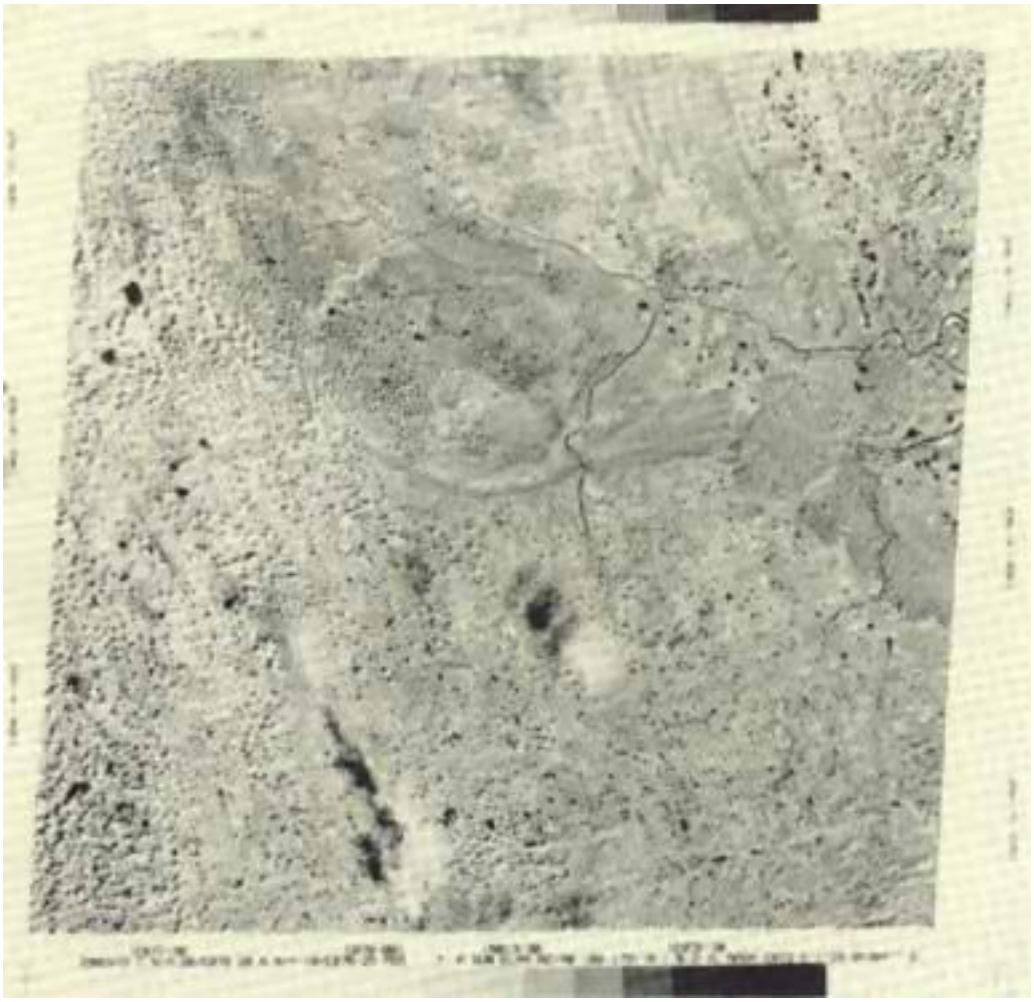
SWAMI PERVADES THE UNIVERSE

Laila and Homer Young were a couple living in California.

Homer used to work in the establishment concerned with launching of satellites. In 1972, Laila joined a group led by Indra Devi of Mexico, an ardent devotee of Swami, and came to Puttaparthi to meet Sai Baba. Homer desired that Puttaparthi should be photographed from space right at the time his wife was in Baba's presence. Several photographs were taken by a satellite from 200 miles above the earth. Because of the great distance, no clear details of habitations, hills or buildings could be seen in the photographs, which showed only a number of patches and dots in black and white that made no sense. When Laila saw them on return from Puttaparthi, she felt very much disappointed. Being middle class people, she felt they should not have wasted US$60 on these poor pictures.

Several years went by. Some Sai devotees on their way to Tecate to attend the wedding of Indra Devi's daughter visited the Homers' home. He was then running a Sai Book Centre. There were several photos of Sai in different poses in the Centre. As the visitors showed interest and liked some of them, Homer showed them the satellite pictures of Puttaparthi too. The visitors were closely looking at those photographs. Suddenly, a lady cried out, "Here is Sai Baba!" Curiosity aroused, they could all discern the face, in profile, of Sri Sathya Sai composed by the numerous patches and dots, which had earlier made no sense to Homer and Laila. The image was now crystal clear. The crown-like thick black hair on the head, the eyes, the shape of the nose and, wonder of wonders, even the birthmark on the cheek of the enchanting face of Swami could be clearly seen.
Homer made his own calculations. He took into account longitude and latitude and found that the photograph

covered a vast area, 40 miles long and 20 miles wide. He realized with considerable astonishment, that Swami's form filled so much area. From the data available, Homer concluded that Swami was looking at an extensive area surrounding Prashanti Nilayam.



In 1978, Homer came to Puttaparthi to meet Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. He saw a great circular aura around Swami's head. He took several photographs and showed them to Swami. Bhagavan smiled sweetly and said, as Lord Sri Krishna told Arjuna, "These are trifles in my boundless divine magnificence (Anantha Mahimas)." These photographs taken on 29th November 1972 have been placed for exhibition in the planetorium in Prashanti Nilayam.

"NETHI, NETHI"

There is a Sanskrit saying:

"Yatho Vacho Nivarthanthe Aprapya Manama Saha; Aanandam brahmano Vidwan, Na Bibhethi, Krithashcha Nethi."

The Universal Absolute is beyond the comprehension of the five senses as well as mind. Only an ardent devotee can realize the incomprehensible Universal Supreme Reality and achieve transcendental bliss. He is then above and beyond every kind of fear and enjoys the state of perpetual bliss. This highly spiritual concept was clarified by Bhagavan Baba with a simple and amusing anecdote drawn from Ramayana:

"Sita, Rama and Lakshmana reached the ashram of Rishi Bharadwaja. According to the prevalent practice, the rishis

sat in one group and their wives and other women sat in another group. They did not sit in a mixed gathering as we do these days. On reaching there, Sita took her seat among the women and Rama and Lakshmana sat with the rishis. The two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana were wearing clothes of renunciates (sanyasis). Due to that and also because of their radiance, both the princes were looking as splendid as the rishis themselves.

It was impossible to recognize and identify who was Rama and who was Lakshmana. But Sita had not changed much and wives of rishis could immediately recognize her. They drew close to her and affectionately engaged her in conversation in easy informality. Women by nature, tend to be inquisitive and talkative. On the other side, rishis were busy with their metaphysical discourses. Here, women were busy with their whispered conversation. They asked Sita, 'Dear Sita Devi, has your husband also come?' She replied, "yes. I have come along with Him. He is sitting there with the rishis.' The women then asked, 'Of those two sitting there, who is your husband?' Would Sita stand up in that entire gathering and point out her husband? She was very modest and noble and also a dedicated wife (Pathivratha). Unable to give an outright reply, she silently sat with her head bowed. But the ladies would not leave it there. They went on asking queries like:

Is he that person sitting a little behind or a little ahead? Or is he the person wearing beautiful robes? Is he that fair complexioned man? They went on showing this person or that, with one description or another. But Sita was very patient. Whenever a person other than her husband was

pointed at, she shook her head in denial until, when Rama's turn came, she became silent and modestly bowed her head! Her gesture itself signified her confirmation that the person pointed at was indeed Lord Sri Rama.

"In the same manner, the Vedas went on repeating "Nethi, Nethi, Nethi" (Not this. Not this. Not this...) while trying to describe the inner essentiality of the Universal Absolute (Parabrahma Tathwa). When the Vedas were to finally describe 'That Universal Absolute', they became mute, wordless! That is why it was referred to as 'Mauna Vyakhya Prakatitha Parabrahma Tathwa - the essentiality of the Universal Absolute, which can be described only by wordlessness, perfect silence!"
What a charming anecdote Bhagavan has chosen and how beautiful was his exposition! In simple words and by a sweet and enchanting anecdote, Baba unravelled the meaning of the Vedic words, "Nethi, Nethi..." He also explained their spiritual significance.
Ordinarily, these words are superficially and literally explained as "Not this. Not this..." But there is another and more subtle way of interpreting them. The Supreme Being is universally pervasive. It is boundless in magnitude and infinite are the variations It displays. It is immutable and It is indestructible. So, when the nature of that Parabrahma is considered, and in that context "Nethi" is used, we should understand the word as : "Not only this, not merely this, but there is a lot more to it!" If we look for the deeper meaning of the word "Nethi", in this manner, its scope becomes vast and vast and profound.

The entire universe comprising moving (chara) and non-

moving (achara) entities is suffused with that Universal Being (Parabrahma). It is omnipresent, that is, there is no place or point of time in the universe where that Universal Being does not exist. Therefore, when we try to identify that Supreme Reality by looking at a particular object, this and that and that, and question ourselves, "Is it this? Is it that?" and so on, the response, "Not this. Not this" does not satisfy us adequately. On the other hand, the answer, "Not merely this. Not merely this," fits more perfectly the Universal Reality we try to describe.

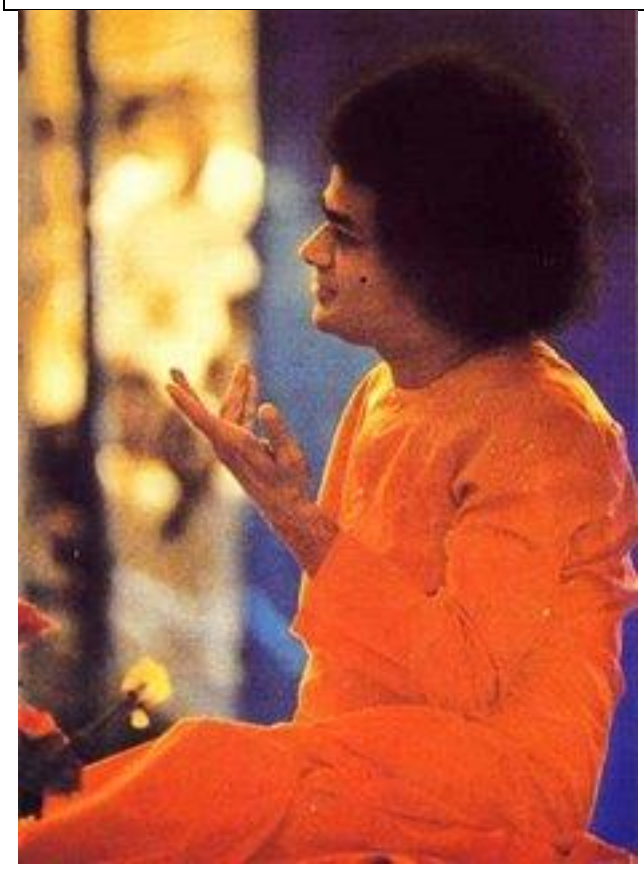
When we try to understand the compassion, magnificence and distinctiveness of Sathya Sai Parabrahma, we question ourselves, "Is it this?" We soon realize, "This is not all; there is much more to it." So, that indeed is the correct answer, the satisfying answer. For the Vedic dictum, "Nethi, Nethi", therefore, the correct and fully satisfying answer is, "Not merely this; there is much more to it." The subtle explanation given by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai will bestow enlightenment on even the enlightened.

Our homage to the Greatest Repository of Gyn~an.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 6
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

DAY 4 : SUNDAY

CHAPTER 7 - THE ALL-POWERFUL - CREATOR, PRESERVER, DESTROYER



I am the Atma that dwells in all living beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all things. All that you see in the cosmos the moving and the stationary objects is a manifestation of the Atma. ~ Baba ~

CREATION (SRISHTI)

To alter a living being into a non-living entity and vice versa is one of the sportive gestures (leelas) of God as demonstrated several times by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

ANT BECOMES BEADS

On the holy occasions of Fridays in the month of Sravan, married Hindu women customarily perform Gowri pooja (worship of Goddess Parvathi). A Hindu couple wished to avail of one such occasion to worship also the Lotus Feet (Pada Pooja) of Swami. They requested Swami for permission, which was readily granted. They then gathered all the materials needed. But they could not get hold of black beads, which are essential for the pooja. At the appointed hour, Swami arrived and took his seat. In their excitement, the couple totally overlooked the absence of the all-important beads and commenced the ceremony. Suddenly, a big black any crawled out of a flower offered at Swami's feet. Swami smiled indulgently and commented, "What, are you worshipping me with black ants?" And he picked up the crawling insect and placed it in the lady's hand. To their wonderment, the ant suddenly changed into two black beads! So the only thing wanting for due performance of the worship reached their hand after all! The grateful devotees were astonished at Swami's ability to create by His mere Will. The lady was immensely pleased that Baba enabled her to complete the ceremony satisfactorily in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

In this instance, Baba altered a living object into a non-living object, without taking away life. But there is another beautiful episode where He changed lifeless objects into a living being.

PARROT FROM BETEL LEAVES

Swami was at that time touring Andhra Pradesh. He stayed

in a devotee's house. After meals, a silver plate containing tender betel leaves, areca nut powder, lime and other ingredients was placed before Him. He leisurely removed the ribs from the leaves as He prepared the latter for eating. And He carefully arranged the ribs in the plate in the shape of a parrot. He was all the while talking with devotees gathered around Him and he suddenly asked them a question, "What do you think God is busy with?" They answered, "Srishti is what the God is busy with." Swami promptly touched the parrot's form on the plate in front of him; it suddenly came to life and flew out vigorously beating its wings. The devotees were astonished at the wonderful sight. Joining in the general merriment, Swami too laughed enchantingly.

DIAMOND EAR-TOPS IN COOKIE

Indulal Shah once invited Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to dinner in his house in Bombay, now known as Mumbai. Swami was seated on one side of the dining table. Opposite him sat Shah and his daughter. Mrs Shah brought a plate of freshly cooked hot vadas (savoury cookies made with soaked black gram paste, deep fried in oil) and placed it before Swami. He picked up one of them and placed it on the plate of Shah's daughter and told her to break it into two before eating. When she did so, she found a diamond-studded ear-top in each piece. All of them were thrilled. Swami Himself put them one each on the girl's ears.
It was Kodai Kanal in the fourth week of April in 1997. Several devotees were dining with Swami. Swami finished His meal, and was going round the devotees, talking to them in the dining hall. He went near a devotee and said, "Break

the pooris (puffed and deep-fried nan like dish) before you eat." The person did as suggested by Swami and found, to his surprise, a golden ring. Swami said, "That's for you. Have it." Everyone was pleasantly surprised. Anil Kumar was also there eating pooris. Swami asked him to eat fast. "Swami, who knows what have You put in which poori!" said Anil Kumar. He further added, "So I am checking every poori and am eating carefully." Every one had a hearty laugh at Anil Kumar's words.

In every such event, the issue is not what has been created out of what; it is Swami's Will that matters. That alone is the central factor, the cause as well as the effect. Swami once declared, "What I will, happens; what I order, materializes."

MAINTENANCE (STHITHI)

On one occasion in Thrayee, Swami's residence at Brindavan, Swami invited Brigadier SK Bose to address the assembled students and staff. The Brigadier spoke mostly about the lessons he had learnt at the feet of Swami, concluded his talk and approached Swami to touch His feet. Swami did not allow him to do so but asked him, "Why did you make no mention of what happened on that Dussehra day?" Brig. Bose replied, "Swami, what should I say about it? I am merely an instrument in Your sublime hands. I do not have any individuality of my own. I am ever grateful to You, Swami. I cannot describe my indebtedness adequately in words." After that, Swami granted him the privilege of touching His feet. As Brig. Bose slowly moved to his seat, Swami told members of the staff, "That day, Bose was indeed dead. I brought him back to life. He has still plenty to do for Me."

Two months earlier, Swami had entrusted to Bose the work of laying a twelve feet-wide concrete strip around the Mandir. He also directed that it should be completed before the beginning of the Dussehra festivities. The job took twenty-five days at the rate of twelve hours of daily labour. Many a devotee participated in the labour of love and devotion. After finishing the job on time, Bose attended every evening discourse that Swami delivers customarily during the Dussehra celebrations spread over ten days. On the final day,

Vijaya Dasami, Thursday, 20 October 1988, he was suffering from high temperature. Nevertheless, he made his laboured way to the Poorna Chandra Auditorium and sat in a chair close to the dais.

Swami commenced His discourse. Meanwhile, Bose began feeling loss of breath. Suddenly, he collapsed in his chair. But strangely, even though his eyes were closed, he was aware of what was happening around him. He saw a huge, golden coloured bird standing there and looking at Bose with eyes full of pity. Bose could not imagine how a bird so big could make its way into the auditorium. But he saw that Swami raised both His hands and waved them as if He was driving the bird away. And it just disappeared. In the course of His discourse, Swami was reciting a verse. He abruptly stopped midway through the verse and quickly came down from the dais. He seemed to be holding something in His closed right fist. As He lifted up Bose by the shoulder with the left hand, Swami patted the back of Bose's head with the right hand. Probably, He was holding Bose's life in the right fist, and while patting on the backside of his head, inducted life back

into his body. Bose opened his eyes. He was surprised to see Swami standing close at hand just by his side, that too, on the holy Vijaya Dasami. Wanting to touch Swami's feet, he extended his hand. Swami told him to get up and stand. But Bose continued to sit offering salutations to Him. Swami patted on his back to give him strength. He told him, "Stand up. Come on to the dais and take your seat near the door." Bose obeyed. Then Swami resumed His interrupted discourse and went on speaking for a full hour. The lifeless face of Bose steadily and gradually acquired the glow of life within that hour.

About two months later, the sports day was being celebrated in the Hill View Stadium. At the outset, Swami hoisted the Games Flag. Bose was present there and was thrilled to see on that flag the image of the celestial bird, Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. Bose remembered that it was the same bird that had sat over him on the Vijaya Dasami day with its eyes full of pity for him. Bose came to know, much later, that according to the Garuda Puran, it is Garuda that carries saintly souls to Heaven (Brahmaloka). Brig Bose was referring to this episode when he humbly pleaded with Swami that Bhagavan had restored him to life and that it was beyond him to find words to describe his gratitude to Him.

"YOU ARE EMBODIMENT OF ATHMA"

Baba once elucidated the nature of Athma and its relationship with the constituents of the physical body, like limbs, organs, senses, mind, intellect, etc. The essence of what he said is briefly given below:

Mind (manas), consciousness (chitha, awareness), senses (indriyas) - all these join together to give full shape to body. But Athma is not the combination of all these things. There is Athma in the body; there is Athma in the mind; and there is Athma in the consciousness and the senses. All these function under the direction of Athma.

This can be illustrated by a simple analogy. A car has steering, clutch, brakes and several other parts. Does each of them function on their own? When one travels by car, does the horn blow on its own? Does the steering move by itself? Obviously not, there is a driver behind all these. Likewise,

body is the vehicle and Athma the driver. That driver makes the eyes see, ears hear and mouth speak. It is only as long as the driver is present that the various parts perform their allotted functions. Once the driver abandons the body, the very same eyes can no longer see, the same ears cannot hear, the same hands can do nothing; the same mouth can talk no more. All the organs and parts become non-functional. Earlier all these were made to work, to function by a Master, the Athma. As long as that Master remains in it, this body is 'Sivam' (divine, auspicious); when he leaves, it is but a 'savam' (corpse).

If we deeply ponder over our true identity, as Swami repeatedly suggests, we will soon realize that we are but embodiments of the Inner Self (Athma); and that the parts, organs and other constituents of this earthly body are merely instruments and by no means that Inner Self.

THE SIMLA INCIDENT

Here is yet another instance of the supra-human divine power of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Once, Sri Sathya Sai went to Simla along with some of his devotees. Swami Karunyananda too was in the group. That trip saw an unbelievable event. It was evening when the party arrived at their lodgings in Simla. At about 6.30pm, as darkenss approached, a two-year old boy died in a house in the town. The parents were grief-stricken. seeing their agony, a friend advised them, "Sri Sathya Sai Baba is now in town. Take your son's dead body there, place him at His feet and beg for mercy." The distraught parents wrapped the dead body in a piece of cloth and took it to Baba. Heart-

broken with grief, the mother laid the dead child at Baba's feet and wailed, "Swami, please bring him back to life, wake him up to life!" As the poor woman was crying, the ever-merciful Bhagavan cast a compassionate look at the dead boy. The boy suddenly came to life and began crying. The tears of grief and desperation of the parents turned to tears of joy. They washed the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sai with their copious tears. The devotees too were overjoyed and immensely moved at this miraculous happening and hailed the glory of Bhagavan with resounding cries of Jai Sai Ram! Jai Sai Ram!

ULTIMATE DISSOLUTION (LAYAM)

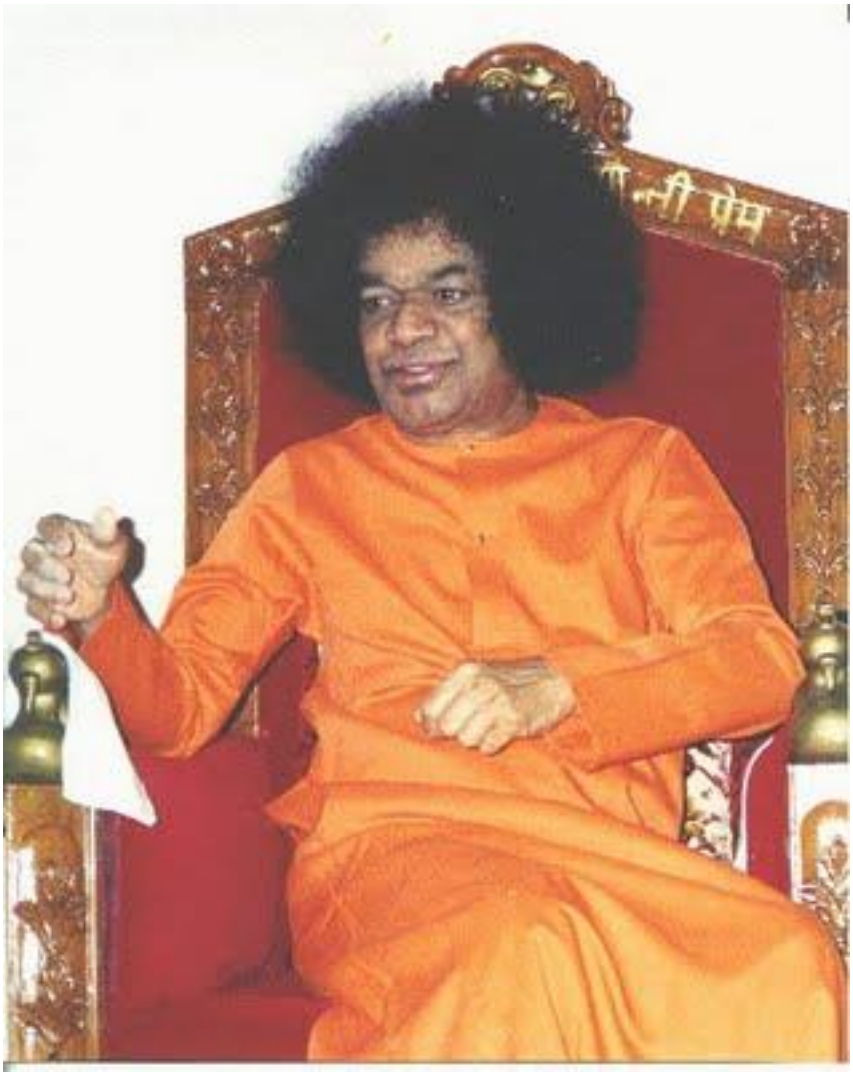
Karanam Subbama was a blessed soul who cared for Swami when He was a child and was known as Sathyam, and loved him as if he was her own son.

As the ever-swelling crowds of devotees arrived to have His darshan, the lady cooked meals and fed them. Through endless service to Swami and His devotees, she used to feel that her life's mission was fulfilled. When Prashanti Nilayam was being built, Swami told her one day that she would live for only one more year. Though somewhat taken aback, she pulled herself together and devoted herself with more sincerity and devotion to Swami's service. Her health was slowly deteriorating. Kith and kin of her natal home took her to their village to look after her. But she could scarcely endure separation from her beloved Swami and returned very soon to Puttaparthi to do as much service as possible despite her poor and deteriorating health. Time passed. Some devotees came to Puttaparthi to invite Swami to their place. Before leaving Puttaparthi, Swami promised

Subbamma that at the time of her demise, He would make it a point to reach her and place holy Ganga waters in her mouth!
Soon thereafter, Subbamma passed away. Some of the villagers recalled Swami's promise and talked about it mockingly that Swami did not keep His promise of offering holy water to Subbamma before her death.

At that moment, Bhagavan was among His devotees in a far off place near Tirupathi. He set out for Puttaparthi telling them that He had to go to Puttaparthi urgently. On His arrival, He was informed that Subbamma had breathed her last several hours earlier. He found Subbamma's body already with ants crawling all over. He announced, "Subbamma is not dead. She is still alive." But those around insisted that she had stopped breathing long ago, that she had indeed died, but that they were nevertheless keeping the body only for Swami's arrival. But Swami reiterated that Subbamma was still alive. He came close to her and called out, "Look Subbamma, I am your Swami. I have come!" And to the consternation of everybody around, Subbamma opened her eyes wide. Tears trickled out of her eyes. The onlookers were dumb struck. Swami tenderly touched her lips with His fingers. And the cool waters of the celestial Ganga flowed out of His divine fingers onto the parched lips! She lapped them up and swallowed. Her face was aglow with indescribable satisfaction and happiness. She touched Swami's hands softly as she closed her eyes for the last time. Swami knows perfectly the exact moment of everyone's death. Creation, maintenance and ultimate dissolution are within Swami's absolute control. That is why He is God Himself!

"CREATION, MAINTENANCE AND DISSOLUTION ARE IN MY HAND"



Swami was once conversing with devotees in His interview room. He showed them His palm and asked what was there in it. Somebody answered that there was nothing there. But Baba said in all serenity, "This empty hand holds everything." When He closed it and opened it a moment later, there was a locust there. Wonder of wonders, there was also a tiny leaf to serve as the insect's food. The locust was actually feeding on it. In a little while, Swami closed his fist and opened it to reveal that nothing was there. The devotees present in the room could not believe their eyes.

Through this incident, Swami revealed to all of us, ignorant as we are, that creation, maintenance and dissolution lie in His control. This incident took place about thirty years ago. Bhagavan explains His divinity in a few pregnant words. He declared, "'Bha' denotes creation; 'Ga' denotes protection and 'Va' denotes ultimate dissolution. He who embodies these three supreme powers is Bhagavan. Herein lies the sublime secret of My essentiality!"

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 7
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 8 - THE LORD OF THE COSMOS

This play is His, the role is His, the lines are written by Him, He directs, He designs the dress and decoration, the gesture and the tone, the entrance and exit. You have to act the part and receive His approbation when the curtain falls. ~ Baba ~

ALL ELEMENTS LIE IN HIS CONTROL

The five elements (Pancha Bhoothas: earth, water, light, air, and space) are in the total control of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We will be able to appreciate the veracity of this statement from a few incidents.

RESCUE FROM FIRE

One day, Baba developed a high temperature all of a sudden. It was 104.5 deg F. Devotees were all perturbed. But happily for them, the temperature came down to 99 deg F within five minutes or so. None of those around Him could understand why the temperature rose so abruptly and also came down

equally quickly.

At about 9.30pm, an open-air dinner was arranged on the roof of Swami's residence. The night was cool and pleasant and there was beautiful moonlight. As everyone was enjoying the meal in the fine atmosphere and the prevailing merriment, Baba turned to a devotee and said, "When you return home tomorrow, caution your mother to be very careful with fire. At the same time, assure her that I will always be with her and protect her from every hazard." Everyone was somewhat taken aback by Baba's words. What made Him talk of fire and future hazards? They pressed Baba to let them know what the matter was. Swami explained, "His mother was praying in her pooja room. A number of lighted oil lamps were around her. As she was offering prayers, her saree caught fire without her noticing it. I had to go to her help and put out the flames." Some devotees obtained Swami's permission to make a trunk-call to the lady to find out how she was doing. The lady herself answered their call and confirmed the incident. Swami too spoke to her and consoled her, mentioning that it was He who had doused the flames out of compassion for her. But the lady, devout as she was, anxiously enquired, "Swami, while trying to save me, have You burnt Your own hands?" He assured her sweetly, "No, not at all. The flames caused Me no harm. Only My temperature went up a little but soon subsided. Do not worry."

RESCUE FROM FLOOD

During the days when Baba stayed in the old temple, once there were floods in the river Chithravathi. The level of the floodwaters rose steadily and soon it reached the temple

and surrounded it. The situation was quite grim as the water threatened to enter the temple in a few minutes and inundate everything. At that moment, Baba walked into the waters and said, "That's enough. Go back now." Suddenly, the flood began to recede.

As described earlier when, for the first time, the week-long Veda Purusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajnam was performed; devotees thronged the Prashanti Nilayam in thousands. Just when the valedictory offering (Poorna Aahuthi) to Agni, the Fire-God, was about to commence, the sky became overcast. Massive dark clouds coupled with thunder and lightning threatened to bring about a heavy downpour. The present-day auditorium had not yet been built then. And the vast gathering assembled under the open sky had no shelter whatsoever. If it rained, the whole programme would come to a standstill. Noticing their anxiety, Baba assured them, "Don't worry. There will be no rain." In a little while, the dark clouds cleared. The Poorna Aahuthi went on as scheduled and was duly completed without a hitch.

WATER TURNS INTO PETROL

Once, when Baba was going to Bangalore by car, a little ahead of the town of Chikkaballapur, the vehicle stalled as the petrol ran out. There was no filling station anywhere near. Baba asked for water to be brought from the nearby pond. When it was brought in a container, He dipped his hand in the water and stirred it a little. He then asked the driver to fill the petrol tank with the water so 'treated'. The engine sparked to life and the journey was completed without a problem.

On another occasion, Baba, accompanied by a group of

devotees, visited Aurangabad and Ellora in Maharashtra and was proceeding by car to Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. On the way, the car stopped for want of fuel. At that time, petrol dealers were on a State-wide agitation and went on strike, and there was no way to replenish the tank. Bhagavan just ordered the car, "Run!" and it started to run! After reaching Hyderabad, Baba told Sri Kasturi, "Kasturi, without a single drop of fuel, we had to cover 150 miles. What to talk of

petrol, not even water was available on the way this time to fill the fuel tank. We saw no stream nor pond on the route we travelled by."

SUNSHINE IN THE HIMALAYAS

We have already read earlier that in June 1961, Bhagavan took His parents and some devotees on a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Badarinath. Sri Boorgula Ramakrishna Rao, the then Governor of Uttar Pradesh, also joined the entourage and saw to it that every facility was provided to

the pilgrims. The trip from Hrishikesh to Badarinath, situated in the higher reaches of the Himalayas where snowfalls are common, and back to Hrishikesh was completed in just seven days. All through that period, the travellers encountered not a single snowfall. On the other hand, there was welcome sunshine! The hospitable Sun made the weather comfortable and enjoyable. Local inhabitants noticed this unusual weather and felt happy.

The phenomenon was also observed by a number of holy persons engaged in spiritual pursuits at those lonely and inhospitable heights. They guessed, quite correctly, that a highly distunguished spiritual person must be visiting the region, and causing by his presence, such agreeable through un-seasonal weather!

A devotee questioned Bhagavan, "Swami, you eat very little. Your body comprises the five elements (Pancha Bhoothas). Then, from where does it derive its potency?" Baba gave a very pithy reply, "The five elements give me no potency. It is I who gives them their potency."

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 8
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 9 - "WHY FEAR WHEN I AM HERE?"

God is neither distant nor distinct from you. ~ Baba ~

During the time when Sri Kasturi took up permanent residence in Prashanti Nilayam, Swami used to visit the homes of residents who were then only a few. Thus those residents could often share the blissful company of Bhagavan. During one such visit to Kasturi's home, Swami asked Smt. Kasturi to sing a song. She sang a Kannada song composed by herself :

"Ninnu Nambi Bande; Enna Kai Bidadiru, Ghana Mahimane Sai Natha!"

("My father Sai, I have come to You in the fullest faith that you will protect me. Please do not let go off my hand.")

After she finished, Swami replied to her with His own song composed in Tamil, which was her mother tongue:

"Virumbum Munne Tharu Vare, Sai Baba! Vendum Munne Tharu. Vare."

("Why fear? Even before you ask, Sai Baba showers boons. Even before you pray, He runs to you to give protection.")

How sweet, how simple and how captivating is God's wonderful answer to His devotee's prayer! This answer is meant not merely to that lady, Smt Kasturi. It is most certainly addressed to each and every single person in the wide world who is afflicted, distressed, and suffering! More than that, it is addressed to everyone in the entire universe.

CHILD SAVED FROM A TRUCK

The following incident happened in 1955. Residential quarters for devotees were coming up around Swami's residence in Prashanti Nilayam. Shankar, an eleven-year old boy was actively participating in the construction activity. A truck loaded with bricks arrived and the boy was helping in unloading them. After the truck was emptied, he stood at its rear shaking dust off his body and clothes. He did not notice that the driver started the engine and the vehicle was moving backwards. The driver, unfortunately, did not see Shankar and drove the truck very fast.

To his utter shock, the boy suddenly found himself pushed violently by the huge vehicle. Petrified with fear and shock, he lost all bodily control and just collapsed where he stood. The inexorable did come to pass; the heavy tyre of the enormous vehicle crushed his tender leg. The only thing Shankar could do in that awful moment before he became

unconscious was to give out a loud cry, "Swami!" People nearby ran to his rescue, pulled him aside and wrapped a towel around the crushed limb. Totally confused, they did not know what to do next. They could only raise their heads and look towards Swami's residence. To their surprise, they saw Swami standing in the balcony and looking directly in their direction. Before they opened their mouths to tell Him what had happened, Swami told them to take the boy to the hospital adjoining his residence. They did as directed.

Afterwards, Shankar's brother ran to Swami. He loudly wailed, "Swami, my younger brother has lost his leg." Swami consoled him, "Do not worry. Nothing has happened to his leg." As He uttered the sweet words, He pulled back the sleeve of His shirt and showed His open palm. On the palm could be distinctly seen the marks of the truck's heavy tyre. Swami told the distraught young man that He had inserted His own palm between the truck's tyre and the little boy's leg so that the huge weight of the truck would not bear heavily upon the leg.

When doctors found that not a single bone of Shankar's leg was damaged, they were astonished and also very much relieved. Due to Swami's divine Will and immense mercy, the boy recovered soon.

A similar incident happened in 1999. In January 1999, the Sports Day was being celebrated in the Hill View Stadium in Prashanti Nilayam. Despite Swami's suggestion not to be adventurous, students were displaying adventurous gymnastic skills. It was now the turn of an acrobatic event in gymnastics, in which students were participating in somersault on a truck. Nobody noticed that the nuts and

bolts of the iron bars arranged for the event got loosened. Children had completed their even successfully and there was a huge applause. But at the end, Swami did not join the students to pose for a photograph, which He normally does. Instead, He went back to the Poorna Chandra Hall, where He resides. He showed his body to Indulal Shah and to some of the students there. There was blood all over. Swami was bleeding profusely. Everyone was astonished and worried. "I lied below the truck and saved the students. Now, I have to wash the blood. The kids were requesting me to join them and pose for the photograph. Poor kids, they do not know," Swami said in His usual calm and compassionate voice.

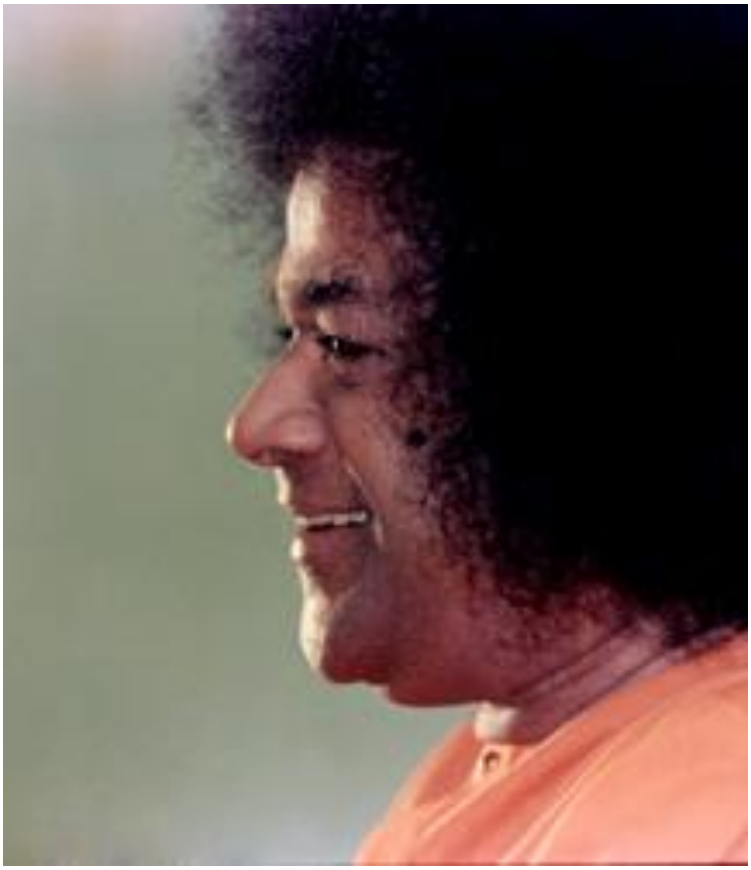
GOD IS CLOSER THAN HUSBAND

Kumar was a student in the Sathya Sai College in Puttaparthi. Swami allotted his parents ground floor accommodation in the eastern block close to his own residence. At the evening prayer one day, Kumar sang a bhajan, "Sai Pitha Aur Matha Sai" ("Sai is the father and Sai is the mother"), as Swami sat on his throne quite close by and nodded His head in tune with the song. Swami's eyes were swimming with kindness and compassion. No sooner had the first stanza of the song ended, than Swami abruptly got up and hurried out. The boy felt that his singing was not probably to Swami's liking. Swami walked into the residence of Kumar's parents. Devotees who watched the scene were surprised. In recent times, no one had seen Swami thus leave His residence and proceed beyond its precincts.

In the residence of Kumar's parents, his mother had a heart attack and was struggling for life. Baba hastened into the house, gave her a glass of water and materialized vibhuthi

for her. After a few words of solace and encouragement to the lady, He returned to the bhajan hall and resumed His throne; just then, Kumar's bhajan song was coming to a close. When it was over, Swami spoke to Kumar, "Do you know why I hurried out? Your mother was on the verge of dying and I went to save her. Here you were singing : 'You are the father; You are the mother'. How could I sit here enjoying your song when your mother was in agony there? I had to reach her urgently and save her."

The lady's husband was all the time present in the bhajan hall among the devotees. His son too was there singing. All the same, only God could rescue the suffering lady. God, undoubtedly, is the closest and the most intimate of one's kith and kin - closer than even husband.



GOD IS CLOSER THAN MOTHER

Swami was to give a discourse in the S.A.P. Kalyana Mandapam (marriage hall) in Madras, now knowsn as Chennai. Thousands of eager devotees gathered to have His darshan and to hear His inspiring words. His divine form filled them with bliss. After Darshan, Swami spoke in Telugu. Chithoor Nagayya, the celebrated actor and devotee of Swami, was standing by Swami and translating His discourse into Tamil. The audience was spellbound. They were imbibing the honey-sweet speech avidly savouring every drop of it. They forgot themselves in happiness at hearing the divine words of their beloved Bhagavan. Suddenly, a small baby, barely a year old and lying in his mother's lap, began to wail loudly. The audience was distracted. Their engrossing spell of bliss was ruined. All eyes turned towards the crying baby who was the cause of the disturbance. A few seconds passed. Everyone saw Swami on the dais gently smiling. He extended his open palm towards the crying child in the 'abhaya' mode (a gesture denoting assurance of protection), but suddenly closed it into a tight fist! That very moment, the child fell silent. None could gauge the reason why the baby suddenly started wailing and why he, equally suddenly, stopped crying. Swami extended the closed fist now towards Nagayya, opened it and said, "A small 25-paise coin got stuck in that little baby's throat and I have removed it. Here it is!" Sri Nagayya was completely overcome by emotions or surprise and happiness and immediately announced it over the microphone. The enraptured audience exploded into wild applause. Even though the little baby was right in her own lap, the poor mother did not know what had gone wrong with her child. It is obvious that, more than even

one's own mother, God is much, very much, closer.

SUICIDE AVERTED

A young man was employed as an accountant in a firm in Calcutta, now known as Kolkatta. His mother was Swami's devotee but he did not share her faith. It so happened that he was accused of misusing the firm's money. Unable to bear the infamy, he even thought of suicide. His mother wrote to Baba requesting His permission to bring her unfortunate son to Puttaparthi. But not knowing how to send it through post to Baba, she kept her letter behind Swami's photograph in her pooja place.

Meanwhile, the boy went to a bridge on the river Ganges. He thought that death would be easy if he jumped into the river. Just as he was about to do so, he heard a voice, "Come to Puttaparthi, come to Puttaparthi." He was surprised. "Puttaparthi, Puttaparthi" - the words continued to ring in his ears. Thereupon, he abandoned all thought of suicide, went to the railway station, purchased a ticket to Bangalore and boarded a train. Strangely, even the noise made by the running wheels sounded to him like "Puttaparthi, Puttaparthi." When the train moved fast, the words sounded fast; when the wheels were slow, the words too were slow!

On arrival at Bangalore, he went to the booking counter to purchase a ticket for his onward journey to Penukonda. The man at the counter knew that if any person asked for a ticket to Penukonda, he would most probably be heading for Swami's darshan. So he asked the young man, "Are you going to have Sai Baba's darshan?" When he answered in the affirmative, he was informed that Baba was presently right there in Brindavan in Whitefield in Bangalore. The young

man stood there, somewhat hesitantly. But the words, "Puttaparthi, Puttaparthi," once again began ringing in his ears. So, he yielded to that call and asked for a ticket to Penukonda! In those days, to reach Puttaparthi from Penukonda, one had to cover several miles on foot. Even as the young man proceeded on the arduous way on foot, the words, "Puttaparthi, Puttaparthi," never ceased to ring in his ears.

He finally reached Puttaparthi at 8pm and discovered that just an hour earlier, i.e., at 7pm, Baba had arrived at Puttaparthi! At that time, summer training classes were about to commence at Brindavan in Bangalore. In spite of that, no one knew why Baba had suddenly returned to Puttaparthi. When devotees enquired on this point, Baba explained, "Students who would be arriving at Brindavan for the summer classes have to be fed. I have come here to collect rice and take it to Brindavan."

Next morning, during the public audience, Swami came close to the young man and addressed him, "Hey, Calcutta! Come in." In the interview room, Baba referred to the accusation against him in his office and told him not to get upset about it. He encouraged him and dissuaded him from putting an end to his life. He also told him to stay in Puttaparthi for nine days before returning to Calcutta. In due course, the man went back to his job. He was thus saved by Baba in response to his mother's prayer, which she could not even send to him by post.

HIS BOUNDLESS COMPASSION

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai was once travelling by car from Bangalore to Puttaparthi. One of His students was driving

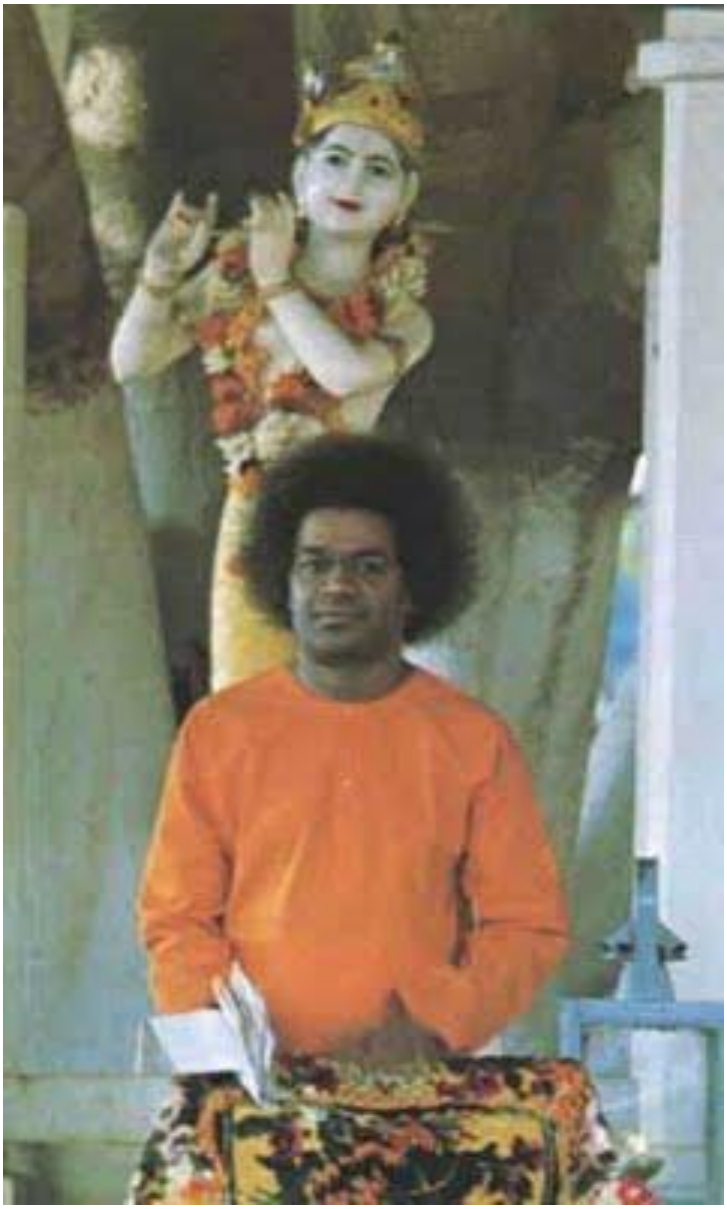
the vehicle. Other cars with groups of devotees were following Swami's car. The ground was stony and rough, the terrain hilly, desolate and silent. A long cobra was crossing the path. The student driver of Baba's car noticed it from a distance. He could not, however, make up his mind whether to stop the car to save the cobra or to run over it. He looked back in the rear seat of the car and found Swami in yoga mudra (deep contemplation). He thought, "Swami is fast asleep. If the car were to be suddenly brought to a halt, His sleep would be disturbed." Therefore, he sped forward and ran over the cobra.

After arriving at Prashanti Nilayam, the student alighted from the driver's seat, ran and opened the rear door for Swami. Swami got down and proceeded towards the verandah of His residence. The student was intrigued to find a wide smear of mud, like a broad strip, on the back of Swami's robes. He said, "Swami, your garments are soiled on the back." Swami's reply was, "A little while ago, I had to go below the car's tyre in order to save that poor cobra!"

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 9
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 10 - THE MASTER OF TIME OM KALA SWAROOPAYA NAMAH

Past is past, it can't be recalled; Future, you are not sure of... The given moment is now (Present) This Present is Omnipresent ~ Baba ~



Several years ago, a lady called Sakamma lived in Prashanti Nilayam. One day, she questioned Baba, "Swami, in the battle

field at Kurukshethra, the Kauravas ranged enormous forces fully armed and ready to fight. In such a situation, how was it possible for Bhagavan Sri Krishna to recite to Arjuna the Bhagavad Gita consisting of as many as 700 slokas? As Sri Krishna took his own time and Arjuna listened, ignoring the enemy's threat, how did the enemy keep quiet?" Swami did not answer her question there and then.

That evening, Swami, along with several of His devotees, went as usual to spend time on the sands of river Chithravathi. The devotees sat around Swami. Sakamma too was among them. Swami thrust His hand into the sand and, as the curious devotees watched with wide-open eyes, He slowly pulled out a foot long gleaming white ivory figure. It showed Lord Sri Krishna sitting on a chariot and exhorting Arjuna with Gita. The image was extraordinary minute in detail and of exquisite craftsmanship. Sakamma, in particular, was staring at it with open-mouthed wonder. Swami explained, "How many days will ordinary mortals take to carve this beautiful ivory image? How many hands will be required to accomplish this intricate carving? How many artists would be required to make the initial design and to prepare detailed plans? But do you see how it has materialized in all its splendour just in a trice, the moment Swami Wills it to be? If God has the Will, He can dominate time and control it. What would take several months for man, I have abridged into just a moment. In like manner, it is also possible to elongate time by divine Will. On the day I gave the Gita to Arjuna in the battlefield, I created in his mind all the time needed. I also abridged it to a few moments for the rest of the troops on the field.

Time is within the complete control of Sri Sathya Sai. He can

abridge it and elongate it at His Divine Will.

HE ABRIDGES TIME

Here is an instance where a period of several years were abridged by Swami into just an hour. There was a Christian student in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He came to India for college education and got himself enrolled in the Madras Christian College, Madras (Chennai). One day, he went to the Sri Ramakrishna Mission. He was very much attracted by the image of Goddess Kali which Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had worshipped. Gradually, he became a devotee of Goddess Kali. He received initiation. He would meditate deep and long on the Devi Manthra. Eventually, he reached that stage when he would remain for hours and hours in samadhi (spiritual trance, a state in which the meditator suspends connection between body and soul). Afterwards, he even converted to Hinduism and took to sanyas (renunciation).

Sometime later, he travelled to Colombo to visit his mother. The poor lady moaned in grief on seeing her son in the garb of a Hindu Sanyasi. She knew that her son would never think of marriage and reconciled herself to it. But she very much desired her son at least to give up his Hindu monk's dress and adopt that of a Christian Father. The son declined to do so. He gave up his mother as well as possessions and returned to India, and in due course, reached Puttaparthi. Swami invited him into the Interview Room. An hour passed. Suddenly, there was a loud cry from inside the room, "Oh, Mother!" This was so loud that every one gathered on the verandah outside could hear it.

A little later, Swami opened the door of the room and out walked the Sakthi devotee bathed from top to toe in holy

vibhuthi. What transpired inside the interview room? It seems that after admitting him into the room, Swami materialized a big forest and directed the man to walk into it. The sanyasi just walked and walked and walked endlessly. Without stopping for rest, he walked on and on amidst huge trees for several days. He covered miles and miles and walked for decades and decades! The suddenly, Swami ordered him, "Stop! Turn around and look behind!" The sanyasi stopped, turned around and stood transfixed. What did he see? The same Goddess Kali, whom he had so ardently worshipped ever since childhood, was standing right in front of him in all splendour!

For several years, this sanyasi had been wishing that he should remove himself to remote forests to spend long years there in meditation. Swami fulfilled that deep urge within the span of an hour. He had desired to perform penance for many, many years. But Swami abridged that also to less than an hour. In addition, Bhagavan vouchsafed him the darshan of Goddess Kali that he had been yearning for. When his most ardent wish was so beautifully fulfilled, the sanyasi could not hold himself back but cried out in ecstasy, "Oh, Mother!" On hearing this cry which emerged out of the inner recesses of his heart, Bhagavan responded in melodious voice, "My dear man, there is no need for intense penance in the Kali Yuga. It is sufficient if you remember your favourite deity's name and incessantly intone it mentally. Only through namasmaran will you attain fulfillment." So saying, Swami materialized copious vibhuthi, poured it all over the delighted youngster and blessed him.

HE ELONGATES TIME

We now come to the incident when Bhagavan Sai Baba extended a time span of thirty days to thirty years. Lal Bahadur Sastry was the Prime Minister of India then. His personal assistant was Thyagaraj. When he had some health problem, he went to Bangalore for a medical check-up. After thoroughly examining him, doctors diagnosed him as a cancer patient and declared his life expectancy to be just three months. They also told him, "Sir, if you do not mind, we have a suggestion. There is only one remedy for your disease, and that is to pray at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and request Him to save you. There is no other way. Dr S Bhagavantham, Baba's devotee, is presently right here in this hospital. Swami is coming here tomorrow to visit him. You may avail of this excellent opportunity.

But Thyagaraj declined the advice. He added, "I am the personal assistant to the Prime Minister of India. I do not need to fall at the feet of any Baba. I can afford to get proper medical treatment anywhere." He followed his own counsel and went here and there for medical help. After two months, he returned to the same hospital and got himself examined once again. Sure enough, doctors declared that he would live only for another month or so. Thyagaraj was now in a desperate hurry to reach Puttaparthi. As he waited for darshan, Swami approached him and said, "Cancer?" Poor Thyagaraj burst into tears and fell at Swami's Lotus Feet. Swami materialized vibhuthi, placed it in his hand and told him to eat it. This was done for three consecutive days. On the third day, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai said, "Cancer is cancelled!" Needless to add, subsequent medical tests confirmed no trace of cancer on Thyagaraj.

This incident happened thirty years ago. Thyagaraj served in the office of Sanathana Sarathi in Prashanti Nilayam until recently. Presently, he is doing service in the canteen in Prashanti Nilayam savouring the unbounded benevolence of Swami.

The extraordinary case of Thyagaraj demonstrates Bhagavan Sai's control and command. That is why in the Sathya Sai Ashtottara Sahasra Namavali (the 1008 attributes and names by which He is worshipped ritualistically), we find Him addressed as: "Kalaya Namah, Kala Kalaya Namah, Kalanthakaya Namah, Kala Swaroopaya Namah..." (Salutations to Him who is Time; who regulates Time; who destroys Time; who is the very Embodiment of Time...).

"TIME AND SPACE BIND ME NOT"

Baba was once on a visit to Venkatagiri and was about to return to Puttaparthi. An old lady, an ordinary resident of Prashanti Nilayam, was at that time in her native village, by the name of Vayalpadu, situated on the Venkatagiri-Puttaparthi road. So, she thought she would pray to Swami to break the journey at Vayalpadu and visit her home. She ascertained the day of Swami's departure from Venkatagiri. On that day, she stood by the road waiting patiently for Swami's car. She also persuaded other villagers to keep day and night vigil at that spot. But the car made no appearance. Then she came to know that Swami had meanwhile reached Prasanthi Nilayam. Deeply disappointed, she too returned to Puttaparthi.

She found Swami on the veranda of His upper floor residence talking to some persons on the ground. She pushed herself forward and without stopping for breath,

asked loudly, "Swami, our villagers and I stood on the wayside near Vayalpadu waiting for You. We kept day and night vigil. When did Your car pass by our village? How did You arrive here?" Amused at her excited manner, Baba burst into laughter. Everybody was looking up at Swami. But suddenly, they heard His laughter just by their side. Swami was standing by their side still laughing; there was no Swami in the veranda high above! None could understand how and when Swami came down from the upper floor to the ground. Swami told the old lady, "Look you have seen how I have come down from the upper floor to the ground below. If I can do this, could I not, together with my car, arrive here right by your village unseen by any of you?"

ANEKA-ROOPA ROOPAYA

(ASSUMING NUMEROUS FORMS)

Baba was in Kodaikanal with His devotees. Suddenly, He

jumped out of his bed, stood and shouted, "Don't fire!" As He said so, He fell on the bed. The body stiffened. Apparently, He had left His physical body. After an hour or so, the body moved. Baba opened His eyes, dictated an address in Bhopal and directed that an express telegram be sent there stating, "Don't worry. The revolver is with me - Baba." Swami Satchidananda pleaded, "Swami, the post-office staff will not accept the telegram if we mention the word 'revolver' in the message. If we change it to 'instrument', they will not object." Swami agreed and the modified telegram was duly dispatched. But the devotees could not make head or tail of the mysterious incident.

A letter arrived from Bhopal four days later. Baba gave it to the devotees. On reading it, they were filled with surprise as well as happiness. What has exactly happened? There was a military officer in Bhopal who had served in the Second World War and distinguished himself. Despite this, he was not given due position in the statewide development programmes under way because freshers were being preferred to old hands. Frustrated, he developed utter distaste for life. Added to this, his wife happened to be away in her parental home. There was no one who could console him and give wise counsel and get him out of depression. Under these circumstances, he decided to commit suicide. He test-fired his revolver to see whether it was functioning all right. It performed well. He readied to kill himself with the second shot. Just as he was about to press the trigger, there, in far off Kodaikanal, Swami suddenly shouted, "Don't fire!" At that precise moment, in Bhopal, the door of the officer's room suddenly flew open. Standing at the door was his bosom friend and old college-mate. He did not come

alone; his wife too was with him. Behind them was the porter who was carrying their luggage.

As soon as the officer saw them, he ran into his inner room, hid the revolver somewhere and came out smiling to welcome the guests. The guest amused his old friend officer with cheerful conversation. He recalled several happy events in their college life. He relived pleasant memories of the carefree company they shared while in college many long years ago. He was quite vocal and entertaining. The lady also joined in and added to their joviality. The warmth and friendliness of the visitors soon drove away the officer's misery and restored his mental equanimity.

The visitors soon noticed that the officer's wife was away. So, they said that they wished to go to another friend's house. They also incidentally mentioned the other friend's address where they were planning to proceed. The officer tried to persuade them to stay on but they excused themselves. Promising to come and stay on their next visit to Bhopal, they took leave of the officer.
The officer now searched for the revolver hurriedly hidden a little while earlier. It was not found despite a thorough search. Suddenly, he remembered Sathya Sai Baba. Sometime back, he had gone to Puttaparthi and had Swami's darshan. His wife was a devout follower of Baba. So, he concluded that this was all Baba's leela. Locking up his house, he went in search of his college fellow at the address given to him. But he was told that no visitor had come there. Just as he returned to his home, an express telegram from Kodaikanal arrived. It read, "Don't worry. The instrument is with me - Baba." On reading it, the officer was overcome with remorse. To express his gratitude, he wrote a detailed

letter to Bhagavan. It is through that letter that Baba's devotees also learned about the full details of the incident.

It is worthy to note that to save a devotee, Bhagavan assumed three human forms, the officer's friend and his wife and the porter, all of them simultaneously, at the same event with profound significance. It also establishes, yet again, that time is under Swami's control. This is the meaning of the Vedic dictum, 'Ekoham Bahusyam' (the One willed to manifest into many).

THE INCOMPREHENDIBLE

It happened around 1988. There were about 1400 students in the hostel of Swami's College in Brindavan at White Field near Bangalore. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai visited the hostel one night. The delighted students respectfully stood in His presence. Suddenly, the eletricity went off. In the darkness, Swami moved quietly towards a boy and whispered to him in his ears, "Athul, I will give you something. Hold your hand." The boy extended his open hand and Swami placed a laddoo in it. He further whispered to the boy, "Don't show it to anybody. Put your hand behind you." Suddenly, the electricity was restored. Bulbs came back to life. Athul looked around. Surprisingly, all the 1400 boys assembled there were keeping their hands behind them. Everyone was having a laddoo in his hand. That is Swami! We get astonished at the amazing leelas. Our reasoning power abandons us, tongue fails us, mind refuses to function; nothing can be understood. How can we comment upon, much less explain, such displays of Swami's divine sport? That is why it is said,

"Yatho Vacho Nivarthanthe Aprapya Manasa Saha," Meaning,

that the Universal Absolute cannot be reached or comprehended by the bodily senses or by mind.

HE ARRIVES UNNOTICED

Muddanahalli is a small town that is located on the way on roadside from Puttaparthi to Bangalore. There is a Swami's School there. In February 1993, the school was to celebrate its anniversary. Teachers and students invited Swami to grace the occasion and Swami gave His consent. But on the given day, He did not come even though the expectant teachers, students and invitees waited and waited long for Him. The cultural programmes, children's dance and other items were gone through without Swami's presence. In due course, even as everyone waited eagerly for Swami's arrival, the entire programme was over. There was a cloud of disappointment casting a dark shadow over the celebrations.

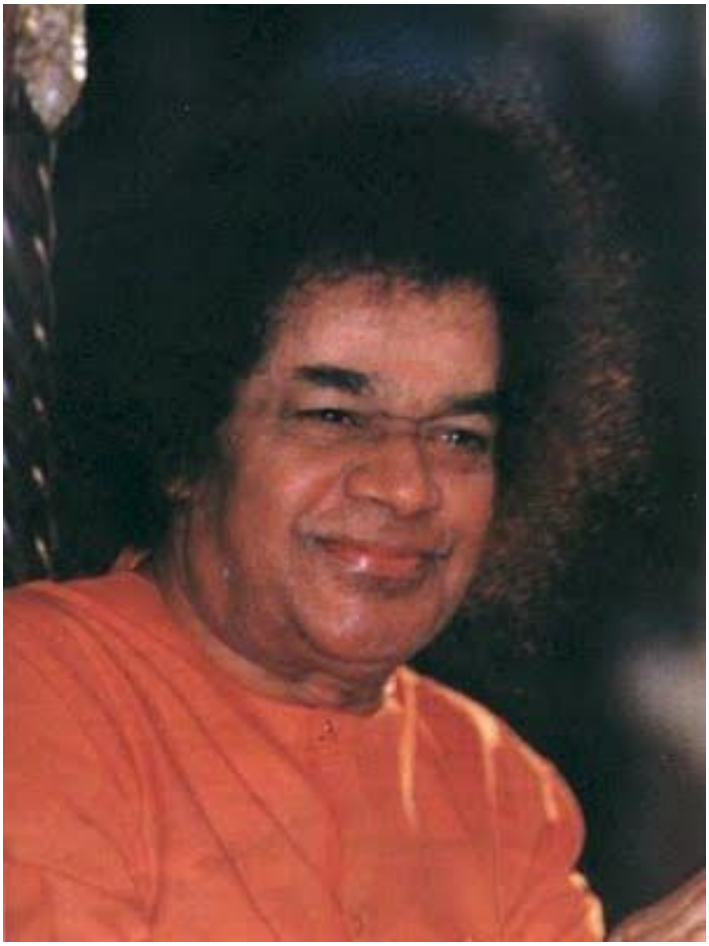
Later, the photographs taken on the occasion were developed and printed. To everybody's astonishment, one of the photographs taken during the dance items showed Swami standing among the dancing children! Not only that, Swami was seen in that picture, not at one single place, but at five different places wearing a different dress at each place!

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 10
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

DAY 5 : MONDAY

CHAPTER 11 - LOVING MOTHER SAI

Love is My form, Truth is My breath Bliss is My food, My life is My message Expansion is My life, No reason to love No season for love, No birth, no death ~ Baba ~



LOVE OF A THOUSAND MOTHERS

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba devotes three-fourths of His precious time to His students. He feels that the future of society rests solely on these innocent, clear-hearted children. He is all love for them. He tells them, "Look at Me within your own selves. I look at Myself in you. You are My

life, My breath and My soul. You are all, every one of you, My form. When I love you, I love My own Self. When you love yourselves, you are loving only Me!"

AGONY MOVES BHAGAVAN

Once, Bhagavan was in Brindavan with His students. He said, "When I am here, you are distracted and are not studying properly. If I go away to Puttaparthi, you will devote yourselves to studies. I am leaving for Puttaparthi at 8.30am tomorrow." The students touched His feet and prayed, "Swami, please Swami, stay here. We will study well." But Swami insisted on leaving, "Your parents entrusted you to My care. How can I see you running around Me without studying? I must leave tomorrow."

The next day was Monday. It was 8.30am. In front of the Thrayee, Baba's white car was ready. The distressed students were also there with agony in their faces. Swami came down from His residence in the upper floor. The students humbly prayed and begged, but did not succeed. Swami took His seat in the car and left.

With hearts heavy, the children went back to their rooms in the hostel. Their minds were full of Swami; what they read could not enter their minds. The absence of Swami rendered the entire environment colourless, lifeless, listless, dark and silent. Every student quietly kept to his own room. No word, no greeting, no conversation, no pleasure, nothing but gloom. Barely fifteen minutes passed when suddenly a student shouted, "Swami is back, Swami is back!" The rest of the students thought that he was perhaps in delusion; more than the others, he must have imagined a car arriving. But a few curious fellows peeped out of their windows. There,

Swami's car was really entering the Ashram precincts! A couple of students were indeed running behind it. That was enough. All the students ran like deer on wings. By the time Swami alighted from His vehicle, they stood around it. Surprise on one side and delight on the other were choking them. As Swami entered and went up the staircase, students were mutely standing below, staring at each other. What has happened? Why has Swami returned? Nobody knew. Then Swami spoke to them, "A mere mention that I am leaving, creates so much commotion and disturbance! Everything gets upset! In the midst of all the chaos, I forgot to take the keys! So I came back to take them." What is this? Can Swami forget keys? The hearts of the children were full with emotion and immeasurable happiness. Not a single eye remained dry. Silence ruled everywhere.

But then, they feared that Swami might get hold of His keys after all, and go away. One student hesitatingly asked, "Swami, shall we put things back in the car?" Pretending to show anger, which everybody could see was not there, Swami said, "No. I will leave in the evening." But the students, clever as they were, did not fail to see the bubbling smile behind Swami's show of anger. They all cried with one voice, "Swami, Swami, please stay here, Swami." Swami turned to them and said, "Look, you sincere, transparent distress has dragged Me back. If you want Me to stay here, you should work hard on your studies, then I assure you, I will stay here. Get busy now with your studies!"

Spirituality connotes agonizing for God, intense yearning for God and undergoing suffering and distress in quest of God - these are the essential features of spirituality.

THE FLOWER OF LOVE

Once Swami paid a visit to Dharma Kshetra in Mumbai. Teachers and students of Bala Vikas there made excellent arrangement to welcome Him. Students sat in orderly rows, each of them holding a rose to be offered to Swami. Their faces were glowing in happy anticipation. There was a small child among them; he was too young to be admitted to the Bala Vikas organisation. He was nevertheless attending classes along with other members. He had also learned several slokas by heart. As he was too young to be seated in the front row, the teacher made him sit in a rear row. He was also not given a rose to hold. The little one's pain at being discriminated showed in his morose face. As he was keen to present a flower to Swami just like the others, he requested some of them for a rose but received none.

Swami arrived on the dot. He walked along the rows of boys who were holding up flowers to Him. He gently touched each flower offered to Him and blessed every student. The little

child was watching each step and each gesture of Swami as He slowly made His way along. Quietly, he slipped himself into the front row. Swami was now nearing him. Just at that moment, the child chanced to see in front of him a tiny flower of grass. He snatched it up and held it in his hand. When Swami arrived right in front of him, he raised his little hands and made his loving but uncommon offering to Bhagavan. Swami smiled sweetly, accepted the simple offering from the child and softly pressed his tender fingers. In appreciation of the little one's gesture, Swami patted him affectionately and also spoke a few words to him. While Swami merely touched the fine roses offered by the others, He carried in His hand the humble grass flower the little child so lovingly offered.

The meetings that followed lasted three hours. After they ended, Swami came out and blessed those gathered there. But the little grass flower of love was still in Bhagavan's hand, as fresh as it was three hours back! Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai notices the yearning and distress lying deep in the heart of a devotee and responds to it.

"SHED A TEAR FOR ME"

This happened in 1976. Swami was in Brindavan. Several engineers were moving all over the place holding some construction plans in their hands. Sri Sathya Sai came out to give darshan to the assembled gathering. To the students crowded around Him, He said, "My dear boys, I am having a new hostel constructed for you. It will be very roomy and comfortable. It will come up at a little distance away at the back of our college building."

Speaking for all of them, one of the boys said, "Swami, we are

quite comfortable here, quite satisfied and happy. We do not want a new hostel, Swami. This Brindavan is our home." Swami explained, "My dear boys, if you consider Brindavan as your home, that's

well and good. And I am happy that you are adjusting yourself to it and feeling satisfied. All the same, I am unable to bear the sight of you little boys cramped for space. It is My duty to ensure your comfort. Foundation stone for the new hostel building will be laid on the coming Thursday." Having said this, He moved ahead towards the open space beyond the portico to bless those waiting for His darshan.

The foundation stone laying ceremony was to take place hardly 48 hours later. Engineers were very busy. But the students remained dissatisfied. They did not know what to do. When Baba visited the hostel on the next day, a boy, the youngest of them all, placed a letter in Baba's hand. He read it through and lovingly smiled at the little fellow. Then He sat on His throne and sent for the warden. When he presented himself, Swami gave the letter to him and asked it to be read aloud. It read as follows:

"Dearest Sai Mother,

Our humblest salutation to Your Lotus Feet. Are You displeased with us? Are we disturbing the silence that is most dear to You? Are we violating the code of discipline and behaving without due restraint? It must be. Otherwise, why would You try to send us away from the beautiful precincts of Brindavan? Why do You insist that a new hostel for us should be built at a far off location? Brindavan is a gracious place; it has brought Your sweet and protective love and care very close to us. Even Gods would desire to enjoy such

love.

With heart-felt love and affection, Your Child.

P.S. If You are determined, at any rate, to build the new hostel far away from Brindavan, kindly build also a new residence for You and stay close to us."

As the warden finished reading, there was not a single boy without tears. In one voice, they cried, "Swami, please accept our request." Bhagavan's heart melted at the sight. He immediately sent for the Chief Engineer and conveyed the students' wish. He demurred, "These plans have all been drawn with extreme care. And not much time is left for laying the foundation stone too." But the boys told Him with one voice that only Brindavan should be their home. Seeing the mood of the boys, Swami indicated to the Chief Engineer to have the plans redrawn.

Fresh plans were made locating the new hostel within the Brindavan Complex. On hearing the exciting news, the children were in ecstasy. On the appointed day, when Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai was about to light the lamp of 'arathi', a boy said, "Swami, You are doing so much for our sake. But we have nothing to offer to You." Swami replied, "Happy tears are trickling down your tender cheeks. That is all I want. Shed a tear for Me. What I desire most is only your happiness!" That noble structure which stands now in the Brindavan Complex is a sweet monument, enduring for all time to Baba's immense love for children!

In 1976, a number of deer from the adjoining forests of Mudumalai strayed into Brindavan. A nice place opposite to the Thrayee was provided for them. Swami fed them with

apples and looked after them with love. One day, as Swami emerged out of the Thrayee to give darshan, students ran to him. At the same moment, in the garden opposite, deer too wanted to be close to Swami and moved up to Him near the wire mesh that stood around the garden.

Baba drew the attention of a devotee standing by to the enchanting scene comprised of the loving children and the equally loving deer. He said, "These are two-legged dear (deer); and those are four-legged deer (dear). Both are dear to me."

FLU DRIVEN AWAY

Influenza once spread like wild fire in the Higher Secondary School in Prashanti Nilayam. Nearly 200 students were affected. After the evening bhajan concluded, Swami asked Dr Alreja to pay a visit to the School. The doctor found about 200 students suffering from high temperature, cough and

vomiting. The infection seemed to be beyond control. It was then 8 pm. As the doctor made his way back to his room, he thought that as Swami's room would be closed at that hour, he would report to Him next morning. At 8.30 pm, a volunteer came to tell him that Swami was waiting for him. The doctor hurried into Swami's presence. Baba asked him, "I was waiting for you. Why have you not come to Me immediately?" The doctor replied, "Swami, by the time I returned, it was 8 pm. I thought that your door would be closed by that hour. About 200 students are suffering there from flu. I find it impossible to arrest its spread. I am afraid, at this stage, no medicine can help. Only You can save them!"

Next morning, Baba visited the school and the hospital. He walked through every single veranda and classroom. He went up to the roof also despite the Principal's protestations that it was not properly cleaned up. Swami then called for a stainless steel bucket filled with water. He materialized vibhuthi in immense quantities and poured it into the water. He asked one of the teachers to carry the bucket around and serve the vibhuthi water to every teacher and every student. The disease spread no further from then on. Within a space of four days, every single patient recovered fully. Swami's medical treatment is amazing and inscrutable.

SUPREMACY OF SPIRITUAL LEARNING

What should we pray to God for? Not for worldly wealth and enjoyment, not for material things and property, but for God Himself! Every blessing comes by itself in the wake of God. The learning that makes man yearn for God is known as spiritual learning.

Swami once described how Yashodha went after her

prankster child, Krishna. Yashodha, He said, held a lump of butter in one hand. While she showed it to Krishna with a view to enticing him, she kept the other hand behind her back holding a stick. When the little child drew near for butter, she would grasp him and deal a couple of strokes with the stick. That was her way of putting her errant child straight.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai, reaches for us exactly in the same way with worldly learning in His open hand but holds spiritual learning in the other hidden hand. Boys and girls come eagerly seeking admission into His educational institutions, colleges and university. Swami receives them and imparts spiritual learning along with worldly learning. Even an ordinary individual is gradually processed and refined in this manner. Man becomes truly wise in course of time. Swami's indescribable love makes it possible.

In Baba's seats of learning, children are educated from kindergarten level to post-graduate level absolutely free of charge. M.B.A, M.F.M, M. Tech. (Computers) courses have also been introduced in the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, a deemed University. These are in addition to normal courses at Bachelor's level (in Arts, Science and Commerce) and Master's level courses in Arts and Sciences. Facilities are available for doctoral studies as well. A number of big, neat, roomy and airy buildings have been built. A state-of-the-art Planetarium costing crores of rupees has been installed. In November 2001, a new music college was also opened on the university campus. These are all tokens of Baba's boundless love for children. Side by side with these symbols of 'worldly learning', Baba ensures that the students receive 'spriritual learning' too.

"MY CHILDREN ARE MY ENTIRE PROPERTY"

On 22nd November 1981, the day the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was inaugurated, Swami addressed the students. He said, "Students should be the roots from which would grow trees of peace and security for the world. My purpose is to water those roots. I am dedicating Myself in every way to students. I have immense faith in them. You ask anyone what properties Sai Baba holds in His name. You will be told, 'Oh, He has so many buildings, so much land and so on.' All those possessions amount to nothing. My sole property is nothing but My children!"

There are many who are unable to understand this simple truth. Such unfortunate persons who cannot imagine even a single mother's love can never gauge the love of a thousand mothers. The most sublime quality of Sri Sathya Sai is limitless patience. He says, "Countless persons criticize Me. There are many who call Me by all sorts of names. All kinds of vile things are written about Me in newspapers. Thousands of pamphlets are published against Me. I have only one answer to all of them -- My smile!

"These are all but vicious reactions to what is indisputably good. Stones are hurled only at fruit-bearing trees. Some people are envious and intolerant by nature. As more and more Sathya Sai Organizations blossom, their jealousy too grows by leaps and bounds. They fabricate more false stories, accusations and gossip. Even children are dragged into these malicious activities.

"Param-athma Swaroopulara! (Oh, Embodiments of Supreme Divinity!), what to say of these small-minded persons, even if the whole world unites against Me, no harm

comes to Me. My heart is always pure. I have no selfish ends. I have nothing of My own. This is My truth. Only criminals are beset with fear. Why should a lion doing no wrong, be afraid?

"Whatever I do is for the welfare of the world (Jagat Kalyan), not for Myself. I am aware of this irresistible truth, hence I am ever in Bliss, the unbroken Bliss!"

FROLICSOME GOD

In 1983, students of the Sathya Sai College arranged a science exhibition in the kalyana mandapam (wedding hall) in Brindavan. Sri Govind Narayan, then Governor of Karnataka, was visiting Brindavan for Swami's darshan. Baba brought him along to see the exhibition. On show were several models, scientific devices and artifacts made by students. One of the items was a piece of alarm equipment. A ray of light proceeds from one end to the other; and if a hand is placed in between, an alarm rings. As Swami went round and reached that equipment, the student who had devised it, told him, "Swami, please put Your hand here and the alarm rings." Swami did so but there was no sound. The student got perplexed. He said, "Just a moment, Swami. Something seems to have gone wrong. I will set it right." He tinkered with it a little, put his hand between the two ends, and sure enough, the alarm rang. Confident now, the student invited Swami to insert His hand. He did so, but again the alarm did not ring. The student got thoroughly confused by now and mumbled something about the equipment needing another repair. The Swami told him, "It needs no repair. I am not that kind of a thief for whom you have designed this; so quite rightly, the alarm did not ring!" He moved on. Science is not

capable of reaching Swami; He transcends science.

TOLERANCE

Many years back, students in the Primary School in Puttaparthi used to take their daily morning bath in cold water. Swami felt sad and thought, "Parents of these tender young children left them in My care because of their immense trust in Me. Poor fellows, they have only cold water to bathe in every day." That thought soon led to the provision of solar heaters, which heat water using Sunrays. In no time, they were installed in the hostels. Students, teachers and the Principal of the school were very pleased. They prayed to Swami to inaugurate the solar heating system and He agreed.

Arrangements for inauguration were soon completed. The equipment was connected to a tap by a rubber tube. When Swami arrives and turns that tap, hot water would flow into a bucket placed below. They did not have to wait long; Swami arrived and He turned the tap. Unfortunately, the rubber tube got detached just at that moment and there was a burst of hot water on Swami's face and His garments. The sudden and unforeseen mishap shocked everybody. There was embarrassed silence all around. Not a hand moved to correct the situation as the onlookers stood petrified. Swami understood their misery. He laughed aloud to break the spell and said, "Look, the inaugural bath has been taken by Me!" Swami's laughter and pleasant remarks brought relief to everyone. Their hearts became light and they could breathe easily. Everyone joined in Swami's laughter.

Baba is ever-merciful. He knows no anger. "My life is My message," He says. It is a message of love, compassion and

mercy. There is no place for anger.

"BENEFIT FROM CLOSENESS TO BABA"

Once Swami was in Kodaikanal. Sitting in his room, He was looking out at the crowds waiting outside for his darshan. Several students were sitting at His feet around Him. Swami told them, "Do you realize how fortunate you are? Thousands are waiting outside for Me. Here you are, enjoying the privilege of serving at My feet. But you do not know how fortunate and lucky you are. I am giving you this opportunity so that you will be close to Me. If I feel like it, I can walk across the sky from one side to the other. If only I

did that, the whole world would be at My Feet. Several lakhs of devotees would swarm to Me. But at that time, not one of you would have the opportunity of being so close to Me. Armed guards would always surround Me for my protection. I assure you, those days are not far off. Believe Me, a day will come, when you will barely be able to spot a tiny red flash of My robes, from a long distance, that too with a great effort. You will realize Swami's glory when I walk across the sky from one end to the other. So, as of now, try to derive benefit from every single moment of your closeness to Swami."

On one occassion, a programme of sports was organized in the Hill View Stadium. Inaugurating the games, Swami released two white pigeons. As the games were under way, Swami and some distinguished guests watched from a dais. After some time, they noticed the same pigeons, earlier released, flying in the sky across the dais. Swami observed, "Look at those birds. They have been with us for a long time. Therefore, they have become incapable of adjusting themselves to the outside world although they have been set free." No doubt Swami was then referring only to those two pigeons but what He said then applies to all His dear students and devotees.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 11
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

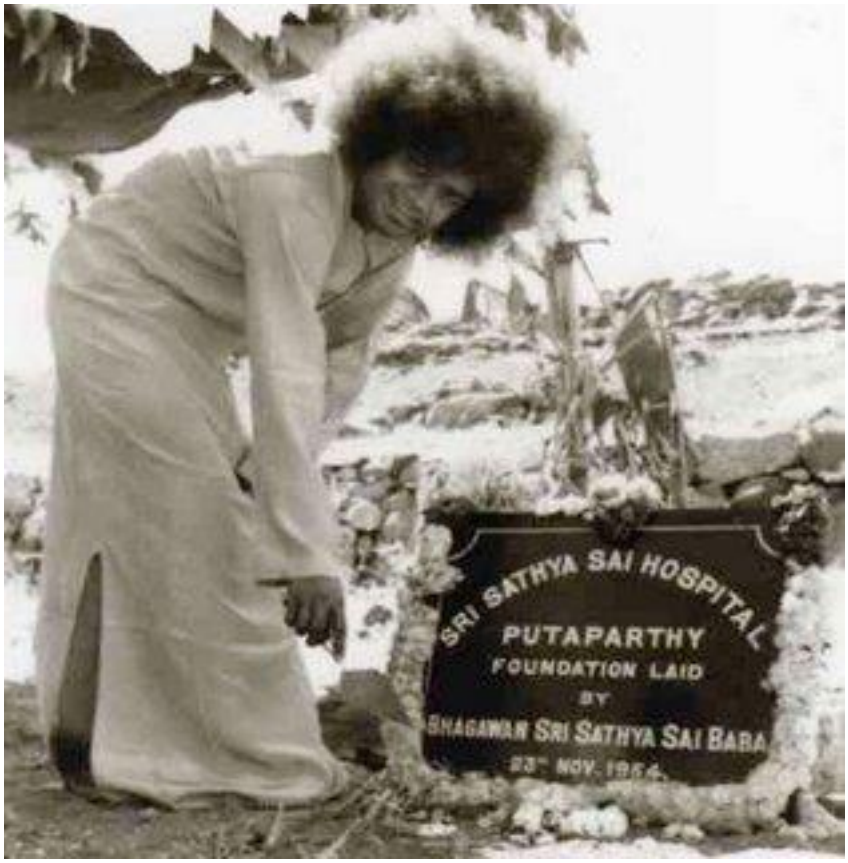
CHAPTER 12 -THE TEMPLES OF HEALING

You will understand Me only through My work, that is why sometimes in order to reveal who I am, I Myself show you My 'visiting card', something that you call a miracle... They are neither magical tricks nor siddhic (occult) powers, which can come to everybody with the appropriate discipline and yoga exercises, but My powers to protect, heal and save people and materialize objects originate in God and can be used only by an Avatar. They are in no way designed, disciplined or developed, but flow from cosmic power. ~ Baba ~

SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITALS

For the benefit of the poor, Bhagavan established in Puttaparthi the Sathya Sai General Hospital in 1956. Everyone knows that the hospital as well as the doctors there are mere instruments; the real doctor is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Himself. There are many number of instances where Bhagavan Himself took over and miraculously cured patients who had been given up or could not even be diagnosed by doctors.

Then Bhagavan willed that a Super Speciality Hospital be established, where treatment costing several lakhs of rupees elsewhere, would be given free of charge; and the hospital would become another wonder of the world. The divine Will fructified in no time. On 22nd November 1990, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba laid the foundation stone and proclaimed that exactly one year later, on 22nd November 1991, the hospital would be inaugurated.



The Super Speciality Hospital was designed by an eminent architect, Dr Keith Critchlow, Director of the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture in London. On the suggestion of Isaac Tigrett, he came to Prashanti Nilayam and had Swami's darshan. Swami granted an interview to him, during which He explained to the architect the intricacies of designing the

proposed hospital. Elaborating what He had visualized, Bhagavan pointed out Vasthu (the Hindu science of architecture), planetary and astrological aspects that needed to be considered. The engineer was astounded at the depth and extent of Swami's technical knowledge.
He returned to London and set about drawing up a design according to Swami's instructions. He was not successful. On the advice of a friend, he imagined himself to be a mere tool in Baba's hands; he surrendered himself totally to Baba's mercy; he prayed earnestly to Baba; and then he started the work afresh. He took a long piece of drawing paper. From one end to the other, in one single effort, he drew a sketch of the hospital. He added one ward at each end, extending on either side and bending towards the middle, as though two loving hands were extended and then closed around the object of that love, just as directed by Swami.

A group of architects took over at this point. They worked for three months, seventeen hours a day, filling up every detail and completed all the designs and plans. They sent the entire set to the construction company in India, designated by Swami. But Dr Critchlow had his own doubts. "Even in a very technically advanced country like the USA, a super speciality hospital of this kind cannot be constructed in less than seven years. How then can Swami build this hospital in six months?" he wondered.

Architects arrived from London. They laid the foundations and erected concrete pillars of 3-4 feet height. When Swami went to Bangalore in May, these architects also left the site and returned home. On 22nd May 1991, on his way to Kodaikanal from Bangalore, Swami took Col. Joga Rao along

and went to the site to see how far the work had progressed. From that day to the already announced day of inauguration (viz., 22nd November 1991), time available was precisely six months. The structure was to be a majestic one; up to date medical equipment was to be procured and installed; and a thousand other requirements had to be met before the facility could be made functional. Col. Joga Rao said, "Swami, even if we put thousands of workers on this job and make them work day and night, can we complete the project by 22nd November? What about funds...?" Swami interrupted, "Do not create waves of doubt and indecision. Swami's Will is bound to be fulfilled." He then summoned the Indian engineer, Brig. Bose, and instructed him, "Get two thousand workers through Messrs Larsen & Toubro, put them on the job and complete it on time." He left for Kodaikanal.

Brig. Bose did as he was instructed by Swami. He left the entire burden whole-heartedly on Swami's divine shoulders. He engaged more than two thousand workers daily and ensured that work went on day and night without intermission. His efforts bore rich fruit. Even by 15 October 1991, more than a month ahead of the proclaimed day of inauguration, the mighty building was completed and handed over to the medical experts for equipping.

Isaac Tigrett donated several items of medical equipment. The Government of India waived duties and taxes and transported them to Puttaparthi by air. To enable jet aircraft to fly to Puttaparthi directly and unload cargo without delay, the Sathya Sai Aerodrome had been upgraded and designated as an International Airport a year earlier. With a donation of one crore of rupees from John Sinclair of the

American Sai Foundation, up to date equipment for carrying out blood tests was procured from the USA. It can perform 20 different kinds of blood tests in respect of 600 patients per hour and hand down the results for study and analysis by doctors. Its computer can store the results pertaining to ten million patients and can download any information on demand.

Finally, the great day, 22nd November 1991, arrived. In accordance with the divine Will of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, on the very first day of inaugurating the hospital, as many as four open heart surgeries were performed! How wonderful! What a miracle! The day of inauguration had been announced in advance, exactly one year ago. Six months back, there were only uncultivated agricultural fields at that spot. Within a span of five months and a half, magnificient buildings came up; the rarest and the most modern medical equipment arrived directly at the Puttaparthi airport; the hospital was declared open precisely on the date announced a year previously; open-heart surgeries were performed on the opening day itself. Is all this believable? Experts all over the world were astonished.

Another similar Super Speciality Hospital has been constructed in Bangalore. That is also with the Divine Sankalpa of Bhagavan Baba. In November 1999, an announcement was made about the hospital and by November 2000, it was ready in full swing. Inaugurating it on 19th November 2000, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai stated : "Sai institutions are eternal. They will serve the poor forever."

One cannot but stare amazingly at Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai' sankalpa and how He executes it. He once declared, "My Will is bound to be fulfilled. Even if the fourteen worlds (Charhurdasa Bhuvanams) join together to oppose Me, they cannot prevent whatever I Will to do. Nobody has the capacity to comprehend My divine power. None of the Gods, from Lord Brahma downwards, can comprehend it. Even a ten-millionth part thereof is much beyond comprehension of the brainiest man!" These sublime words of Bhagavan should be cherished by mankind.

POTENCY OF PRASADAM

A couple brought their little daughter, sick with heart trouble to Puttaparthi. Doctors at the Super Speciality Hospital found two or three holes in her heart. As the case was considered an emergency, they decided to perform open-heart surgery the very next morning. She was immediately admitted. The distraught father decided to

inform Baba about the crisis early next morning and to obtain His blessings. So he went and sat in the audience hall. The ever-merciful Baba was moving among the devotees. A boy, whose birthday happened to be on that day, brought toffees and offered them to Swami. Baba

accepted them and threw handfuls of the toffees among the seated devotees. One piece landed in the lap of the heart-broken father of the heart patient. He was overjoyed and accepted it as Swami's holy prasadam. He took it to his daughter and made her eat it. A little while later, the patient was moved in for operation. The doctors took last minute X-rays and, to their consternation, found no trace of anything wrong with her heart. They decided that she needed no operation and discharged her. Is it possible for anybody to describe Swami's immeasurable love and mercy in words?

WHO HAS PERFORMED THE SURGERY?

A man suffering from a number of ailments got his heart examined in the Super Speciality Hospital. His condition was extremely distressing. Doctors felt that he was in no position to undergo the strain of surgical intervention and refused to do anything. The patient began to pray fervently to Swami. He prayed to Bhagavan that He should somehow get the operation done and restore him to normal health. Bhagavan heard his prayer. He talked to the doctors and enquired how this particular patient was doing. They explained that he was suffering from several complaints and in their opinion, was not a fit case for operation. Swami said, "Go ahead and perform the operation. Nothing untoward will happen. I will oversee it." The operation was performed and, to the utter disbelief of doctors, it was successful. The doctors informed

Him that the operation was very successful and that the patient was in an excellent condition.

It is a usual practice at the Super Speciality Hospital to take video films of operations performed in complicated cases. Swami asked the doctors to view one of those video films. They were surprised when they did so; they found Swami in several forms resembling each one of them around the operation table. Relieved of their pride and ego, they realized that it was Swami, and Swami alone, who was performing operations and that they were only incidental, mere tools in His divine hands. With utter humility, they bowed to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan.

The Super Speciality Hospital rapidly grew from strength to strength. It has Departments of Cardiology, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Uro-nephrology and Ophthalmology. There is also a Lithotripsy Centre specialized in breaking the stones in the urinary tract with the use of high-energy waves. In this hospital, all kinds of treatment and surgical operations, which elsewhere would cost lakhs of rupees, are done totally free of cost. It is acclaimed as one of the wonders of the world!

Speaking about this hospital, Swami said, "Here patients are ever cheerful. Their relatives are also happy and cheerful. Doctors smile as they serve the patients. Nurses cheerfully attend to their duties. The whole place is full of happiness. Seva Dal workers are busy cleaning and polishing the wards and rooms spick and span. No fees or any charges of any kind are levied in this hospital. Doctors elsewhere wonder how it is possible to provide medical facilities of this high

order totally free of charge. There should be no occasion for such wonder or doubt. A job done with a pure heart suffers no dearth of funds."

WHY HOSPITAL, IF GOD IS HERE?

There are always inveterate doubters who question what is the need for a hospital if God incarnate is right here to attend to every problem of the devotees.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai referred to such doubts and said, "Some people might be questioning: 'Swami is capable of healing the sick by His mere Will; why then is a hospital of this size and attendant paraphernalia needed?' Let them think a little further. This one is not the only hospital of Mine. Suppose there is a person in Chennai who runs a clinic or hospital. He treats handicapped children and heals them. His healing centre too is Mine. As a matter of fact, every single hospital irrespective of where it stands belongs to Me. I am overseeing every one of them. Why go so far? Those who pray to Me from the bottom of their hearts seeking My help, irrespective of who they are, from whatever place they

pray, be it hospital or home or any other spot, irrespective of the language in which they pray, all of them are Mine. They belong to Me. Do not confine Me to the few acres of land around Prashanti Nilayam. Whenever a person prays earnestly for Prashanti, the spot from where the person prays will become a Prashanti Nilayam.

"Remember another salient fact. This hospital helps to inculcate faith in you, to enable you to recognize divinity and to cast away doubts from your mind. Besides healing the sick, a hospital serves another purpose also. Some people have blind faith in medicines and injections. It is my duty to provide medical help to such persons also. Their faith in God and His mercy is not yet firm. A hospital is definitely needed to help them too."

TO EACH, A DIFFERENT TREATMENT

A few years ago, Dr Sitaramayya, one of the doctors in the hospital in Prashanti Nilayam, was not keeping good health and was bed-ridden. Bhagavan Baba went to his room to

enquire about his health. He sat by his side, cut an apply and fed him with His own hands and left. Sri Kasturi was with Swami all the while. He thought, "How blessed is this doctor? Even illness has brought him so much good fortune! Swami Himself walked into his room, enquired about him, cut a fruit with His own hands and fed him piece by piece. How much I wish I had fallen ill!"

Sometime later, Sri Kasturi too fell ill with pain in his backbone. He could hardly move. He hoped that Swami might visit him too. But Swami sent a word asking him to come to His room immediately. Pain or no pain, there was no question of disregarding Swami's summons. So, Sri Kasturi made his way laboriously to Swami's presence. Swami gave him a bundle of New Year calendars and ordered him, "Take these calendars and distribute them yourself, one for each room. Go." Without a murmur, Sri Kasturi picked up the bundle, went to every room on every floor of every building in Prashanti Nilayam and completed the distribution according to Swami's instructions. Seeing his agony, some persons offered to do the work for him but he did not agree. They requested to be allowed at least to carry the heavy bundle for him but he declined. Sri Kasturi later said, "How do they know why I turned down their kindly offer?" This was Swami's treatment to the pain in the backbone of Sri Kasturi.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah

Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih

End of Chapter 12

Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 13 - PARAMAM VICHITHRAM LEELA VIBHUTHIM

THE MIRACULOUS VIBHUTHI

Vibhuthi - "What I materialize is a manifestation of Divinity with a potent significance as well as symbolisation. It is symbolic of the cosmic immortal and infinite nature of all forms of God. Atma or the spirit is what is left when everything worldly and transient has burnt away. In first place, it is symbolic of the life-death cycle in which everything ultimately reduces itself as ash. 'For dust through art, and unto dust shall through returnest.' Ash or dust is the final condition. It can undergo no further change. In the spiritual context, it constitutes a warning to the recipient to give up desires, burn all passions, attachments and temptation in the fires of worship, which makes one pure in thought, word and deed. It is a symbol of Divinity." ~ Baba ~

VIBHUTHI CANCELS CANCER

Once an advocate arrived at Prashanti Nilayam. He was a chronic smoker. Cancer afflicted his throat. Doctors advised surgery, along with radiation and chemotherapy. He desired to obtain Swami's permission before the commencement of the treatment. On arrival, the ever-merciful Bhagavan invited him into the interview room. Asking him to hold his palms together to form a bowl, He materialized and poured a large quantity of vibhuthi into them and asked him to eat it all. It was dark in colour and tasted like bitter gourd. Swami affectionately cajoled and persuaded and helped him to finish it. After the interview, the man walked out and went into the canteen for a cup of coffee. As he as at it, his eyes fell on nearby pakodas (a savoury disk, crisply fried in oil). Unable to resist, he ate a plateful. Due to pain in his throat, he had not been able to eat properly for a long time, despite his keen desire and strong taste for food. But now, he noticed that he could eat comfortably and relish it. He was surprised. With his finger, he probed inside his mouth at the cancer-affected spot. He felt no pain at all. He realized that the cancer had gone. He was overwhelmed. Tears flooded his eyes as he remembered Bhagavan's mercy.

When on the next day Swami called him again into the interview room, he expressed his gratitude to Swami and fell on His feet. He told Swami that he was proficient in Sindhi and begged to be permitted to translate and publish the Sindhi edition of Sanathana Sarathi. Swami replied, "It is only for that purpose that I have made you come to Puttaparthi." From then on, the blessed person has been translating and publishing Sanathana Sarathi in Sindhi.

'DONO POLO'

TRIBAL LEADER SURRENDERS TO HIM

Before its reconstitution, the region now called Arunachal Pradesh was formerly a part of Assam. Most of its people are tribals. They were demanding a separate State for themselves, and were carrying on guerrila warfare against the Government of Assam. The government made every effort to please them and win them over. It spent crores of rupees in their territory on development programmes, hospitals, roads, schools and other facilities. Still the tribals were not satisfied and continued with their separatist demand.

In this situation, one of the tribal leaders fell ill with an undiagnosed disease. The government gave him plenty of medical assistance. It got medical tests carried out in reputable hospitals in Calcutta and New Delhi. Nothing helped. He was not able to eat anything at all. Whatever he used to eat, he would vomit it. His friends and relatives lost all hope.

Sri Raja, Home Secretary in the state, had an idea that if the patient could be taken to the divine presence of Bhagavan Sai Baba, it might help. Permission was sought from the Government of India. Ultimately, a group of 29 persons including the ailing tribal leader set out, in the name of all-India tour (Bharat Darshan), and reached Puttaparthi.

As they seated themselves in the audience hall, Swami went to them directly and asked in Hindi, "Where are you from?" The Secretary replied that they were from Assam. Swami

said in English, "Go inside." So they all trooped into the interview room, walking no doubt, but almost like running in their delight and eagerness. After the public audience was over, Swami came into the interview room. He materialized vibhuthi, gave it to the tribal leader and directed him to eat it. He sat on His throne and enquired, "What brings you here?" The Secretary explained, "We have come for your darshan. This tribal leader is having some stomach trouble. No treatment has helped. Medical tests conducted in Calcutta and Delhi failed to identify the disease. He is unable to contain any solid food. As a result, tribal people of that region have lost faith in our medical system and procedures and hospitals. This man is a prominent tribal leader. And only You can heal him."

Swami asssured him, "Don't worry, he will be fully cured." Then Swami began to talk to the tribal visitors in their own language. He talked of their village and their environment. He mentioned how the villagers had thought of building a temple for the Sun God and the Moon God. As he talked, Swami materialized an intricately engraved circular copper plate, nine inches in diameter. On one side, the Sun and on the other, the Moon were carved. He drew their attention to the delicate craftsmanship of the plate and declared that the temple proposed to be built would become known as Dono Polo (meaning, the Sun and the Moon, in their tribal language). He directed the astonished tribals to install this copper plate (yanthra) in the temple and to worship it regularly. He said that worship of God is always beneficial. He blessed them with vibhuthi prasadam and the privilege of touching His Lotus Feet. The tribals took leave of Him with hearts overflowing with joy and happiness.

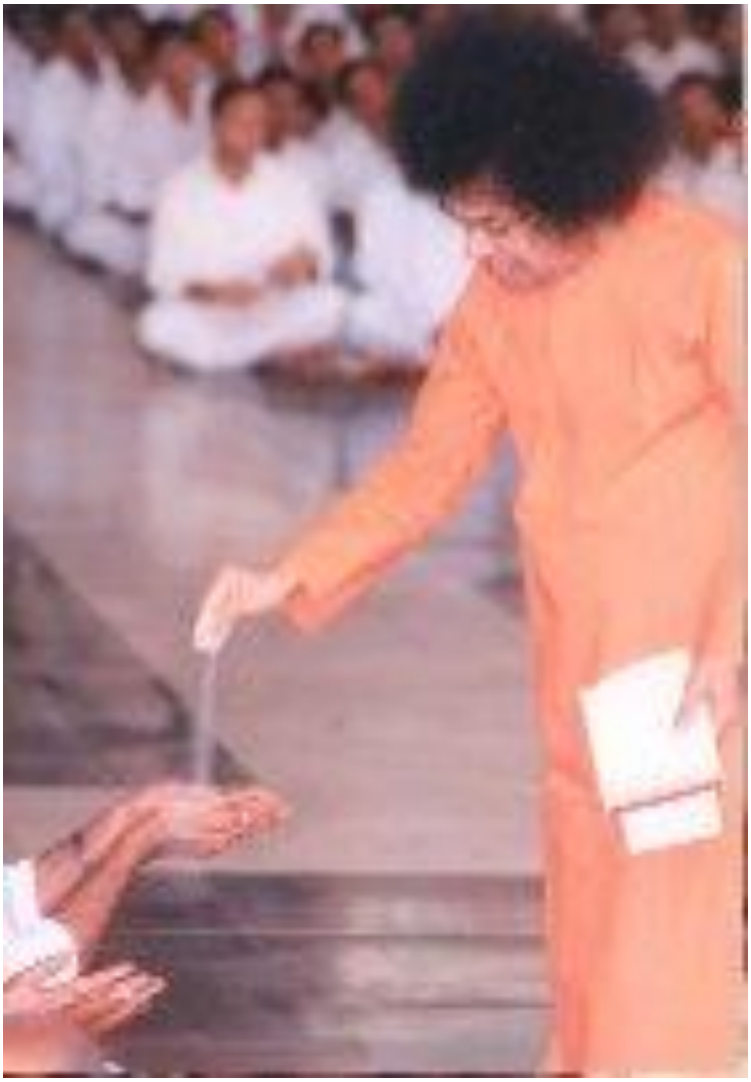
They then made their way to the canteen for refreshments. Their leader saw some white circular pieces of food and asked that they be served to him. The pieces are known as idli, a rice and blackgram preparation. His companions were afraid that this solid food might cause vomiting or terrible stomach-ache as usual. However, since Swami had granted him divine assurance, they hesitatingly allowed him to consume idli. A plate of idlis and the accompanying sauce was finished by him in seconds. Relishing it, he consumed another plateful. While his companions watched in unbelieving astonishment, this man who had not tasted any solid food for several years, ate idli after idli, a good 32 of them! The group felt it was miraculous and enjoyed every bit of it.

The leader told his friends, "This is no ordinary man. With a little vibhuthi, he has completely cured me within minutes, of a disease I had suffered for years and years. There is no doubt that he is God-incarnate. He talked of the temple, Dono Polo, we are planning to build for our favourite deities and created the two images. Let us surrender to Him and strictly follow every word of what He said."
Bhagavan Sai's divine vibhuthi healed the tribal leader in moments. When we hear about this magnificent episode and Bhagavan's love and benevolence so readily and profusely showered, we are moved to bow our heads in obeisance to Him.

WONDROUS POTENCY OF VIBHUTHI

Vibhuthi, the specialty of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, not only bestows good health but in a wonderful manner fulfils other needs also. Patterson was a very successful

businessman of Canada. He travels all over the world in connection with his business. On one of such travels, he came to India and met Dr Bala Krishna, son of Professor Bhagavantham. Dr Bala Krishna invited him to his home. The residence was decorated like a temple. In the middle of the pooja dais, there was a throne on which a beautiful photograph of Swami was placed. Patterson was quite impressed and enquired whose picture it was.



Dr Bala Krishna told him about Baba and His divine powers, His love and compassion; and how He incarnated in answer to the prayers of devout and saintly persons of eminence, for bringing about the deliverance of humanity. As Patterson

heard about Baba, his interest grew. He also felt very pleased. He asked Dr Bala Krishna for something like a memento or token so that it would serve to remind him constantly about Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He probably expected a photograph or picture of Swami. But Dr Bala Krishna thought of something more precious. He felt that the best memento of Swami would be Baba's vibhuthi. So, he gave Patterson a small packet of it. Patterson felt somewhat dismayed and asked, "Ashes? Do you give me ashes to remind me of this great Yogi?" Bala Krishna gently explained, "These are no ordinary ashes. It is divine vibhuthi. It is priceless, invaluable. If you get into some serious trouble and you think that Swami's compassion alone can save you, put a little of it in your mouth and pray to Him."

Patterson returned by air to New York via London. He was given a seat among women and children. They were making terrible disturbance and noise, and he felt unduly disturbed and very uncomfortable. As the aircraft was nearing London, he suddenly remembered the packet of vibhuthi and Dr Bala Krishna's description of its virtues. He immediately opened the packet, placed a little of the holy powder on his tongue and earnestly prayed to Sri Sathya Sai. He asked Baba to see that he is provided a more comfortable seat at least on his onward journey from London to New York. When he landed in London, he was surprised to hear his name on the public announcement system. The announcement mentioned him by name and directed him to go to the airline office immediately. When he reached there, he was told that he was allotted a seat in the First Class on the London to New York flight. He was immensely pleased and offered to pay the extra charges. The officer on duty told him, to utter

surprise, that the additional fare had already been paid on his behalf. Patterson's heart leaped. Just be consuming a little of Baba's vibhuthi and remembering the name of Baba, he could get Baba's helping had thousands of miles away and have his wish fulfilled. He was moved by Baba's mercy and love.

How wondrous is the potency of Baba's vibhuthi! It is not only the holiest one, but also it cures any ailment, however chronic it is, and it has the potency to fulfill any desire of the ardent devotee. What a miraculous one. Let's daily use it with love and devotion.

Paramam Pavithram Baba Vibhuthim
Paramam Vichithram Leela Vibhuthim
Paramartha Ishtartha Moksha Pradatham
Baba Vibhuthim Idam Ashrayami

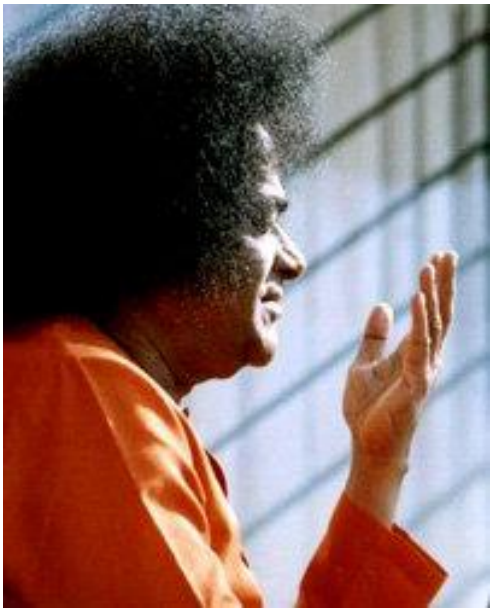
Our humblest homage to that embodiment of love and compassion.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 13
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

DAY 6 : TUESDAY

CHAPTER 14 - DIVINE MIRACLES BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Whoever you are, you are Mine I will not give you up
Wherever you are, you are near Me You cannot go beyond My reach ~ Baba ~



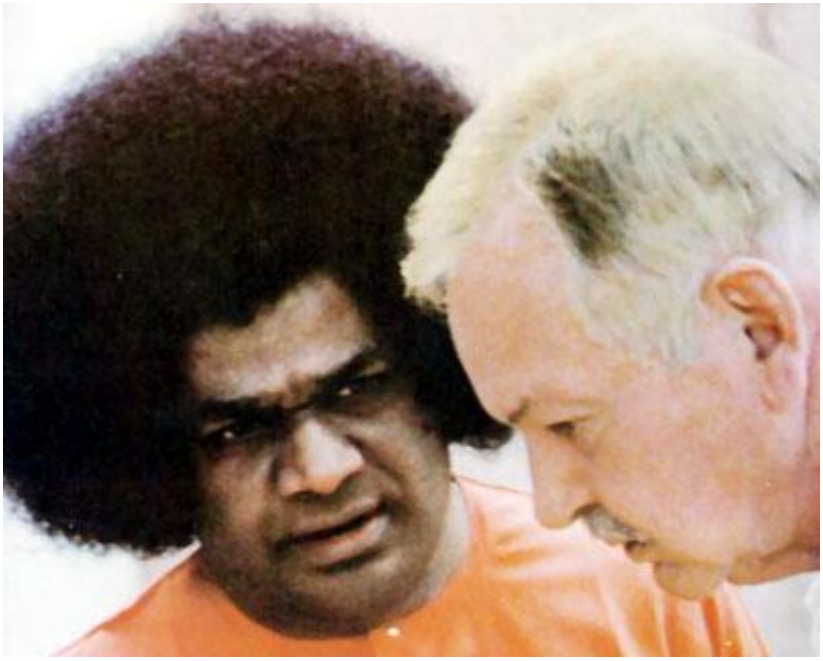
"I pull the wires of this puppet show. Wherever you may be, remember that the string attached to your leg is in My hand," said Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi. Sri Sathya Sai Baba is demonstrating that He is using the strings to draw people to His feet like drawing little sparrows.

THE ETERNAL SAVIOUR

JOHN HISLOP AND THE IMAGE OF JESUS

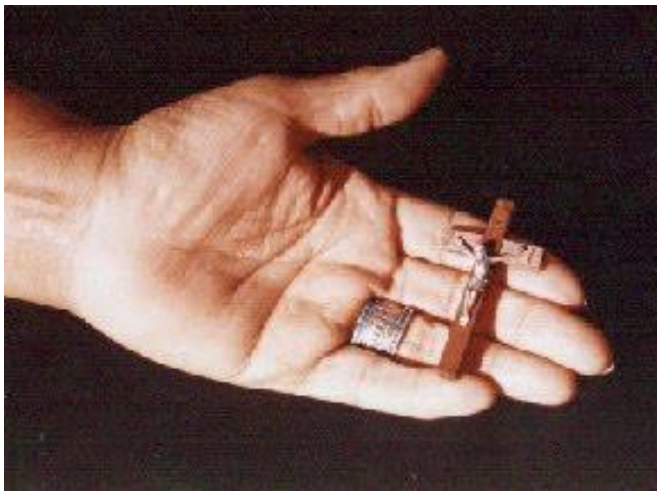
This is the story of Dr John Hislop of Mexico. Ever since his sixteenth year, he was attracted to spiritual pursuits. He was

an earnest aspirant (sadhaka) who was deeplu engaged in the search for truth. He came into contact with eminent personalities and spiritual thinkers like Dr Annie Besant, Jiddhu Krishnamurthi, Paramahamsa Yogananda, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Swami Sivananda and experts in the Buddhist system of Vipassana, and for years, progressed in the path of spiritual enquiry following their guidance. But at the end of it all, he realized that the sweet fountain of love in his Western heart had gone dry and it held now nothing but dreadful emptiness. In 1968, he heard for the first time about Sri Sathya Sai Baba, came down to Puttaparthi and had His darshan. At the very first sight of Baba, he sensed that He was the root of all spiritual wisdom and awareness. He clearly felt that God Himself had entered his heart as love and that abiding love was truly Baba. As a result of his elevating experience, he could develop the rich insight of viewing the whole universe as suffused with love.



On the eve of Siva Rathri in 1973, Baba took Hislop and some others into the Bandipur forest in the district of Mysore. By

about noon, they reached the guesthouse in the forest. At dusk, with the help of some forest dwellers who acted as guides, they walked a long distance until they reached the sands of a mountain stream. They sat in the sand bed of the river for rest. Swami picket up two small green branches of a bush, placed one across the other in His palm and asked Hislop what it was. Hislop said it was the cross. Swami closed his palms over it and gently blew three times on it. When He opened His palms, the cross bore the image of Jesus! He gave it to Hislop and said, "This is exactly how Jesus Christ looked at the moment he gave up life. It does not look at all as imagined by painters or as described by writers. He had no food for eight days. His stomach was empty and drawn inwards; his body became dry and his ribs became prominently noticeable." Hislop stared at the cross in speechless wonder. Baba went on, "This cross is actually made out of the same wood of the original cross on which Jesus was crucified. It took me some time to search for and find that 2000 years old wood.



Every bit of the original cross has disintegrated and merged with the constituent elements. I had, therefore, to gather these elements, and when I had collected enough to make this cross, I materialized it. The image of Jesus as you see on

this cross is the same as the one at the time of his death."

After a few weeks, Hislop and his wife went back to Mexico. As the image on the cross was very tiny, the facial features of Jesus were not clearly visible. Walter Woolfe, one of Hislop's friends, took several colour photographs of the image of Jesus, part by part, enlarged them and made a larger picture out of them. The finished picture was extraordinarily touching, arousing boundless kindness and compassion. The photographs were all arranged on a table so as to reveal the intricate and minute carving on the image. Viewers wondered at the creative power of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai.

Until that day, the sky was absolutely clear all along the Mexican coast. But all of a sudden, without any warning, a terrible lightning flashed amidst dark clouds. Strong winds

gathered speed in a few moments and threatened to smash the window-panes. Door- curtains were flying. In the midst of this chaos that developed all of a sudden, Mrs Hislop recalled, "It is now 5pm and to-day is Friday, the same day and time of Christ's death by crucifixion. What is happening now before our very eyes had been described in the Bible too." She produced a copy of the Holy Book and read the relevant section, "At the moment Jesus died on the cross, there was a great storm with thunder and lightning filling the sky. The decorated hangings of pictures and photographs on the wall in the room flew away." Everyone present there in the home of Hislop felt delighted at witnessing a phenomenon too wonderful for their imagination. On the next day, the San Diego Tribune reported the heavy storm that had suddenly occurred quite unexpectedly.

Hislop and his friends felt that there must be some sort of relation between the sudden recurrence of the out-of-season storm that had reportedly occurred 2000 years ago, and the cross, materialized by Bhagavan Sai Baba. When Dr Phanibanda reported this incident to Swami, He confirmed that the incidents had actually occurred and that they were truly related as guessed by Hislop and his friends.

INDRA DEVI

Born a Russian, Indra Devi had mastered Yoga from India. She discarded her original Russian name, Dr Mrs Kenauer, and assumed the Indian name of Indra Devi. She used to teach Yoga in her ashram in Tecate in Mexico. When she was 60 years old, she happened to meet Howard Murphet in

Madras and heard from him, for the first time, about Sri Sathya Sai Baba. She was not particularly impressed.

Once, while in Mumbai, she happened to see the treatise, "Bhrigu Samhitha", which was in the possession of Chaya Sastry Kanthilal Pandya. She looked for and found what was written about herself in that book. She read, "Because of the punyam accumulated in your earlier lives, you are about to have darshan of some exalted personage. Even at this moment, you are under His protection." The account further clarified, "Exalted personage means God!"

In 1996, when she was in her sixty-sixth year, she had the darshan of Sri Sathya Sai for the first time. At the very first sight, she developed strong faith and belief in Swami's divinity. Swami gave her an interview and asked what she would desire to have. She did not ask

him for worldly wealth or even salvation. She simply prayed, "Swami, please light up the spiritual lamp in my heart!" Swami materialized and gave her a locket and vibhuthi and

assured her, "Whenever you need anything, ask Me. Irrespective of the physical distance between us, I will hear your prayer. I will always be with you."

There occured once a vast fire in the Mexican mountains that destroyed thousands of houses and many acres of forest. It was feared that the conflagration might consume the Sai institutions in Mexico and the USA. Unable to withstand its fury, many people abandoned their homes and possessions, and fled for their life. Travelling by car, they reached the top of a mountain and took refuge in a house. They spent four hours there praying to Sai Baba. The fire raged below them all around the mountain. After it died down at last, they returned fearing the worst. To their relief and surprise, they found that the Sai Nilayam of Indra Devi was unscathed even though everything around it got complete gutted. The unscathed Nilayam, untouched by fire stood in the Prayer Hall remained as beautiful as ever. They felt that Baba had personally stood guard at the place and safeguarded the Nilayam.

At the precise time this daunting fire was raging, Indra Devi was in Chicago giving a discourse about Bhagavan Sri Sai Baba. She saw the ravage and severity of the fire on television. She also read in the newspapers that the fire had occurred quite close to her Sai Nilayam. But she was not at all worried. She thought, "It belongs to Bhagavan. He will do with it as He wishes. If it is His Will that it should burn down, so it will!" True to her steadfast faith, the institution remained absolutely safe. A few days later, she received an invitation from Baba to come over and inaugurate the Women's College in Anantapur. She came all the way from

Mexico and participated in the celebrations. Before she left for Mexico, Bhagavan materialized for her a locket bearing the image of Goddess Lakshmi. While giving it to her, He said, "This is for your home. This will protect it. Hereafter, it will never be threatened by hazards of fire."

When Indra Devi came to Puttaparthi, she organized Yoga classes for the benefit of school children. Baba was pleased with her services. He materialized a diamond-studded ring for her. She had long ago given up wearing any jewellery. But she would wear this ring, she thought, provided it bore Swami's image. Swami sensed her thought. He took the ring back and gently blew on it. Immediately it changed its form. Now, it bore a small stone with Swami's image on it. Swami put it on her finger Himself and said, "Whenever you wish, you can see Me in this ring. Only you, and nobody else, can thus see Me. When you look into this ring, you will find Me exactly as I happen to be in India at that moment, and you can see what I am doing."

Indra Devi was once in California. She looked into the ring and saw Baba sitting in a white car. She recorded a note in her diary, "Swami is travelling somewhere." On another occasion, she found Baba talking to devotees seated in front of Him in a semi-circle. The scene, she felt, was not of Prashanti Nilayam. She noted that detail too in her diary. Sometime later, when she came to Prashanti Nilayam, she checked up with Sri Kasturi about her two visions. He confirmed that the first one showed Swami while on tour. Indra Devi questioned, "But Swami's car is not white?" Sri Kasturi clarified that at the time of her vision, Swami had indeed travelled by a white car. The second vision was also

explained by Sri Kasturi. it happened in far off Kerala.

On 21st November 1970, in the course of the fourth All India Conference of the Office Bearers of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithis held in Prashanti Nilayam, Indra Devi spoke in the presence of Bhagavan. In her speech, she referred to the above two incidents. Sri Kasturi quipped, "So you have been spying on Baba!" Sai Baba as well as the entire audience burst into laughter.

Indra Devi rendered invaluable service to spread Swami's message in the USA through films, books and lectures. During her campaign, she faced an unexpected problem. Those who attended her gatherings began to request for vibhuthi materialized by Swami. On her next visit to India, she mentioned this to Swami. Suddenly, a beautiful silver container with a lid materialized in Swami's hand as if someone handed it over to Him from above. Swami showed it to her and said, "This is a container of inexhaustible vibhuthi. You may distribute any amount of vibhuthi from this; it will never run out." He emptied the entire quantity in it on a piece of paper and gently tapped it. It got filled up again with fresh vibhuthi. As He handed over the silver container to Indra Devi, He directed her to use the vibhuthi from it for healing the sick. Thereafter, whenever sick persons came to her, she used to tell them about Swami's glory and give them some quantity of the holy ashes. This simple treatment restored many to sound health.

When Indra Devi came to Puttaparthi for the Siva Rathri festivities in 1969, Swami invited her, Walter Cowan, his wife Elsie Cowan and some others into the interview room.

After some discussion on spiritual matters, Swami materialized a beautiful rosary containing 108 pearls and showed it to them. Everyone was anxious to see to whom Baba would present it. Baba said, "This is no ordinary rosary. It is extremely potent. It can heal every chronic disease. This is very essential for the service which Indra Devi is doing." The precious rosary was presented by Baba to Indra Devi. She was in tears of joy. "Swami, will it heal any and every disease?", she asked. Baba replied, "Except those caused by evil Karma (deeds) inherited from earlier lives, it heals every disease. Even I will do nothing for those who suffer from inherited Karma."

Attendance at the bhajans in Indra Devi's Yoga Centre began to grow. Many of them used to press her to initiate them into some sacred manthra. Unable to copy with such insistence, she took her problem to Swami. He advised her, "The most potent of all manthras is OM. But, as you know, it cannot be given to any and every person. When someone asks for initiation into manthra, look at Me in your ring and ask Me. Whatever manthra comes to your mind at that moment, give that to the seeker. It shall become the manthra coming from Me." With these words, He granted her the spiritual authority and competence to initiate devotees into holy manthra.
Indra Devi was blessed thrice over. Firstly, she was blessed to be able to have Swami's darshan anytime of her choice. Secondly, she was blessed with the power to heal the sick. And thirdly, and most importantly, she was blessed with the spiritual authority to initiate aspirants into manthra. She could thus control the physical well-being as well as spiritual progress of devotees; and she had also the additional

privilege of accessing Bhagavan at will on her "spiritual internet," if we may so describe it!
It is worthy of not that Swami has not granted even one of these three blessings to any other person!

DR FRANK BARONOWSKI

Dr Frank Baronowski was a professor of physics in the University of Arizona, USA. He acquired special skills in the kirlian photography - bio-magnetic field radiation photography - for photographing the multi-coloured aura of illumination that envelops every living being including humans with a special camera, known as the kirlian camera. The colour, contrast, intensity, breadth and depth as well as brightness, vary from person to person, and also with the bodily health and intellectual and spiritual level of the subject. While it may be about a foot deep for ordinary

persons, it could extend to even two feet all around in the case of great thinkers, yogis and spiritually evolved persons.

This aura comprises luminosity of innumerable shades of colour. When the person is quite healthy and cheerful, it will be white. When he is in a mood of affection, pity or compassion, it will be bluish. When the mood is of intense love, the colour turns rosy. In anger and hatred, it becomes red. Moreover, this illumination is not ordinarily visible to the naked eye. One in a million might have the gift of seeing it. But with the kirlian camera, the aura can be clearly photographed. In fact, even the changing mood of the subject can also be seen in such pictures. Dr Baronowski used the kirlian camera for taking photographs of auras of thousands of world leaders, kings, queens, holy persons and religious heads. He did not come across any person with aura exceeding two to two- and-a half feet in breadth.

Dr Baronowski had read some books about Baba in America. He heard about His divinity, but he did not form any firm faith in Him. On the Christmas day of 1977, he happened to visit a certain home. Members of that family, being Sai devotees, were celebrating Christmas singing Sai bhajans. Not quite relishing it, he removed himself to a room on the upper floor, put out the light and went to bed. On a table in the room was standing a photograph of Sri Sathya Sai with an unlighted candle in front of it. Even as he was looking at it, there was a little crackling sound and the candle suddenly burst into flame. Nobody had come in; no one lighted the candle. How did it get lighted? He was somewhat puzzled; and he once again looked at the photograph and saw Swami smiling at him!

The very next year, that is, in 1978, Dr Baronowski came to India to participate in a conference being held in Bangalore. He made use of that opportunity to travel all over the land and to photograph with his kirlian camera hundreds of yogis and holy persons. In no case did the aura exceed two feet in breadth.

One morning, he saw Swami for the first time in Whitefield early at 5 am. When he set eyes on Baba, he was stunned. The effulgence around Swami was beyond his wildest imagination. It extended beyond forty feet! As devotees went on singing bhajans, it was spreading further and further, enveloping the whole building and the thousands of devotees gathered there. It was so bright that Baronowski looked all around Him to check up whether it was caused by the numerous mercury vapour lamps around. As Swami moved, the shimmering envelope of luminescence also moved, like a living, vibrant sheath. He concluded that it must be integral to Swami and must be emanating from Him only.

Summer classes were being conducted at that time. So, Baronowski could watch Swami continuously for three to four days. One day, Swami called upon him to address the gathering. Baronowski described his unparalleled experience, "I am a scientist. I am basically a Christian but my faith in that religion is not particularly intense. By means of this kirlian camera, I investigated 15,000 eminent persons in every walk of life all over the world. But here I have discovered something I never met with anywhere else. The illumination radiated by Baba is of a spectacular rosy colour,

which is characteristic of the most intense, the deepest, and the most selfless love! What is also unique is that His aura spreads and submerges not merely this audience hall but far beyond, as far as I can see, like a flood of light. It is engulfing everything. This rosy luminescence is also displaying silver and gold streaks, intensely bright and perfectly clear. Here is a fantastic spectacle, which I have never encountered till now. Swami is the full embodiment of love (Sampoorna Prema-Moorthi). When Swami comes near us and touches us, that effulgence is flowing into us also; we are getting immersed in that mighty stream of ethereal glow. Swami is the walking personification of love! As I am speaking here, you will notice that my body is shivering. Don't you see? But this shiver is not because of fear. The supra-human aura that surrounds Him in indescribable glory is so moving that my body is shivering uncontrollably!"

Swami materialized a diamond ring and gave it to Dr Baronowski. He also gave him the much sought after interview. Swami spoke about his months-old grandson and told him, "The day you return to America and reach home, your grandson will be subject to a surgery. Don't worry; the operation will be successful. The baby will be restored to complete health." Swami told all this on His own. Dr Baronowski made no mention of the baby at all. However, he did not pay much heed to Baba's words about the child. He was aware that doctors had said that the operation could be performed years later after the baby grew up. He was therefore surprised to learn on reaching home that the baby had indeed been operated upon that very day. The doctor who performed the operation was an Indian. Dr Baronowski told him all that he had experienced in Puttaparthi and

showed him the diamond ring presented by Swami. As Swami had assured him, the baby soon got well. Dr Baronowski was surprised at Swami's sarvajnathwa, (total awareness of past, present and future).

In fact, Dr Baronowski was the disciple of Ulf Messing, a Russian philosopher. Ulf got interested in spiritual aspects of life even at a very young age and at the age of 15, he began his search for spiritual knowledge. In the process, he came to India in 1936 and was travelling on a train to Ananthapur. At the Kamalapur railway station, he was amazed to see the young Sathya Sai Baba, who was barely ten years old. But Ulf noted the unfathomable aura around the boy, and exclaimed, "what a divine personality he is!" Ulf followed young Sathyam to his home, but could not meet him. On his return to Russia, Ulf set up a training centre to train young people in the use of kirlian camera, and before his death, asked one of his students, Dr Baronowski to go to India and study Sai Baba.
Dr Baronowski was amply blessed. He was given the unusual opportunity to investigate Swami's divine power with his scientific equipment. And fully convinced by what he found, he proclaimed the same to the whole world with the deepest conviction.

DR ART-ONG JUMSAI

It was around 1945. The Second World War had not ended yet. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai materialized Himself in front of a house in Bangkok. He called the lady of the house, gave her some vibhuthi and told her to sprinkle it all over the roof of her house and disappeared. He spoke in her own language. She saw that the powder given to her looked like white sand.

She did not however disregard His words and sprinkled it all over the roof of her house. Within a few minutes, an air raid took place. All houses in the neighbourhood, except her's, were destroyed with bombs bombarding all over.
Art-ong Jumsai Na Ayudhya was a young boy in the family. In due course, Art-ong became a student of science. He obtained a doctorate degree from the Imperial College of Science and Technology. He worked as an adviser to some Ministers in his country. He rose high in the professional echelon.

In 1971, NASA of the USA advertised for the post of a scientist in connection with its project of sending an unmanned space vehicle to explore Mars. Art-ong applied and got the job. The project was to land a vehicle safely on the surface of the planet, overcoming all odds, and to collect material from the planet's surface for investigation in NASA. Art-ong was given the task of planning and designing the equipment needed.

Arrangements were made to build a model of Mars in the laboratory with similar characteristics, a model of the rocket and the surface-lander and to carry out investigations. Funds required for the entire project were to be provided by NASA. In a few months, Art-ong was able to develop the needed equipment that was to be tested in the laboratory. But, as had earlier been feared, the landing unit burned off as soon as it entered the Martian atmosphere. After some more months, Art-ong built another but that too met the same fate. It went on for several times. The whole project seemed doomed. Enormous outlays of money went to waste.

Poor Art-ong did not know what to do. He felt terribly depressed. Finally, he could make a successful one. It successfully completed laboratory tests without any hitch. A life-size rocket, which was named Viking, was readied and in due course launched. It was successful and samples of materials from the Martian surface could be obtained.

Art-ong realized that more than his own efforts; it was an "invisible hand" that helped him in his success. Following this, he abandoned the pursuit of science and busied himself with the search for God. Together with his mother, he came to India and arrived in Whitefield. Bhagavan asked Art-ong to work in the Sathya Sai Organizations and spread spiritual education linked to human values.

Soon enough, some dramatic events happened. Art-ong was totally engrossed in Swami's activities. He had no time to look after his own factory in Bangkok. One day, the security guard was sleeping in his room at its entrance. He had bolted the door from inside. But, despite that, Bhagavan Sri Sathya

Sai entered the room, woke him up and bade him to attend to his duty properly. He spoke in the Thai language. The guard who understood his instructions well enough, could not imagine how this stranger could enter the room even though its door had been bolted from inside. Next day too, the same thing happened. When the head of the factory, Art-ong, arrived, the security guard told him everything that happened, apologised for his lapse and added that the whole incident was quite baffling and inexplicable. He then noticed the decorated photograph of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai in Art-ong's room. He told his master that it was this same person who entered the guardroom in the night and alerted him.

A few days later, Art-ong arrived at Prashanti Nilayam. Bhagavan was giving a discourse on the need for linking educational systems with human values. In the middle of His discourse, He invited Art-ong to the dais and to speak. In his talk, Art-ong described his great experiences and how Swami has been kind to him with His loving care and affection.

From that day onwards, Dr Art-ong Jumsai, the distinguished scientist, has been fulfilling himself through serving the divine mission of Bhagavan, disseminating the nectar-sweet spiritual precepts of Swami in the West, with renewed dedication and with stronger faith. In 1998, Dr Art-ong started the Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Bangkok to propagate the ideas of Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values. The Institute has organized an international conference in September 2000 on 'Strengthening Values Education' in Prashanti Nilayam, in which 650 educators from as many as 78 countries of the world participated.

Swami blessed several participants not only with valuable diamond rings but also with several inspiring addresses.

"BE HAPPY; THAT IS THE ONLY THING I ASK OF YOU"

John Sinclair was a multimillionaire belonging to the State of Connecticut in the USA. At one stage of his life, he was caught in a maze of business problems that destroyed his mental peace. One night, as he sat in his room, he prayed to God, "I do not know where you are and what you look like. I only know one thing, that is, that you do exist! Please help me." He prayed most earnestly and in total surrender. From then on, he began to notice that God's invisible hand was protecting him.

One day, he felt he noticed someone walking through the inner hall in his home between 2 am and 3 am. He stared steadily. The person stood unmoving. John Sinclair did not understand who he was and what was he there for. But he could recognize that he experienced some vague sense of happiness and joy that was indescribable. In a similar manner, he had the same vision on another night. He was sure that it was no dream; it was starkly real.
Sinclair went to the Spiritual Centre (adhyathmic Kendra) in New York and mentioned his recent experiences to someone there. The person said, "Just a minute, please;" went inside and returned with a small packet of vibhuthi in his hand and as he gave it to Sinclair, uttered, "Sai Ram." He also spoke at length about Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai and assured him that it was Swami who had given darshan to him. Sinclair was deeply touched. He was but a mere businessman in far off America; his knowledge of anything spiritual was next to

nothing; he had not read even a single book about Sri Sathya Sai Baba; yet the Lord had visited his home in person and granted darshan to an insignificant person like him! In his mind, he fell at the Lotus Feet of Swami at that moment. His heart began yearning for Bhagavan's grace, and for Bhagavan's love. Very soon, it grew and assumed unbearable intensity.

As a consequence of that unbearable yearning to Baba and also Baba's compassion, Sinclair set off for Prashanti Nilayam. On arrival, Swami invited him into the interview room and said, "I came twice to you!" Sinclair stared at Swami in bewilderment. Swami continued, "I have done a lot for you. I have given plenty to you. Even then you have no peace. Why don't you do something for Swami?" When he heard Swami's words, Sinclair was prepared to give whatever Swami asked for. He said, "Surely Swami, most certainly." Swami smilingly told him, "Be happy always. That is the only thing I ask of you!" Sinclair was stunned to hear what Swami desired of him - nothing but his own well-being!

Speaking in the magnificent Poorna Chandra Auditorium on the auspicious Guru Poornima day in 1993, Sinclair said, "When I was a young boy being brought up as a Christian, I used to feel miserable that I was born two thousand years after the departure of Jesus Christ. Someone has truly heard my cry of agony. Here is sitting that very God who had sent Jesus to us!"

Sinclair also recounted a couple of miraculous incidents. "A few months before my arrival in Prashanti Nilayam, I had to make a business trip to another place. I told my wife that I

would pilot my helicopter myself. She tried to dissuade me, 'your mind is very much distracted nowadays because of your business problems. Why don't you engage a professional pilot? Sathya Sai Baba is too busy to sit with you all the time to protect you, as if He were to protect you only all the time. He has got far too many people to look after. Why do you waste His precious time?' I told her, 'I am a qualified A-Class pilot. Why do you doubt my flying skills?' I piloted my own helicopter . But as feared by my wife, the engine of the helicopter failed on the way. The hydraulic system gave way. I lost control of the craft and I knew that death was certain. I pulled out Swami's photo from my pocket and looked at it. The next moment, I found Swami right in the helicopter. He piloted it skillfully and landed it safely on the flank of a hill. He opened the side door, pulled me out carefully, pushed the helicopter away and disappeared. That is how Bhagavan has been saving me, time after time, drawing me closer and closer to His Lotus Feet.

"I will now describe to you a more astonishing incident. That woman who is sitting in the front row here in this gathering is Marlene Sinclair. She is an expert horse rider. She acquired a fine horse and rode it and also trained it for competitions. Once, she was riding fast in the riding course and tried to clear a high wall. Unfortunately, the legs of the horse hit against the wall. That girl was thrown off her saddle and her head dashed against the ground. And the 1800-pound heavy horse landed on her.

"It took a full 45 minutes before the girl was admitted in the emergency ward of a hospital. I got the message on phone

and rushed there. I took out the small packet of vibhuthi from my pocket and as I applied it to the wounds on her face, I said, "This is just like the Holy Water of Christianity." I also put a little quantity in her mouth. When I went to see her on the next day, there was not a single wound on her face. Three months later, she has fully recovered and resumed riding. But the story does not end here.

"In the interview room, Swami looked at Marlene and asked, 'Did I not rescue you from paralysis?' She said, 'Yes, Swami, yes, You did.' After the interview, I asked Marlene, "What is it that Swami asked you, and what did you answer Him?' She then told me, "On that day of my accident, I lost an eye. When the horse landed heavily on me, I was paralysed on one side. As I lay in the rain helpless, a person stood by my side watching me; when I was being taken by ambulance to the hospital, he was by my side in the vehicle; in the emergency ward too, he was by my side all the time; he also kept vigil constantly on me throughout the night at the hospital. That person is none else but this Sai Baba! He made my eye all right; and he healed my paralysis, too. Only then did he move out of the hospital.' Even though this incident happened several years ago, I did not know about it all until the conversation began between Baba and her in the interview room. This is an excellent instance to show that Swami is much more intimate than even one's mother and father.

"My Swami, I have full faith in you. I totally surrender myself at your feet!" concluded Sinclair.

JAGADEESAN

He was working as Deputy Director-General in the Industrial Development Authority, Government of Malaysia. Whenever he spoke about Swami, he used to be contemptuous, malicious and vile-tongued in criticising Him. His name is Jagadeesan. Once, it so happened that Jagadeesan went to the home of his mother-in-law. He saw Swami's photograph in her room. He was virulent in his condemnation of Swami. For two long hours, he riled and ranted and finally said to the picture, "If you really possess all those divine powers as claimed by these people, show me proof thereof. Only then will I believe these fairy tales." He did not realize that he had literally thrown a challenge to Bhagavan Baba. No sooner had he said these words, then vibhuthi appeared on that photograph, the picture that had provoked his ire. He felt as if lightning had struck him. He realized that in this world of scientific thought, there was something transcending science, something incomprehensible to science.

Four months later, Jagadeesan visited India and travelled to Prashanti Nilayam. In the audience hall, Swami neared him and gently moved his loving lips, "Malaysia?" Surprised and wondering how Swami knew that he came from Malaysia, he answered, "Yes, Sir." Swami invited him into the interview room. Jagadeesan was now 32, but somehow felt as if he was a boy of seven sitting with his father. The fatherly affection and love of Swami melted his heart. Copious tears flowed down his cheeks. He had believed in Swami only for a mere four months now. Earlier to that, he had nothing but utter contempt for Him. His vileness during that dark period was hanging heavy in his heart and he could no longer hide his

misery. He decided to make a clean breast of it. "Swami," he cried, "please forgive me. Till four months ago, I had never believed in you." Bhagavan shook his index finger from left to right and again to left, and smilingly said, "Ha! Ha! You were not a mere non- believer, you strongly opposed; you were a strong opposition!" Jagadeesan collapsed in grief and shame; he fell at Baba's Lotus Feet and began literally weeping. Swami held his shoulder and slowly raised him. "Don't cry, Bangaru, don't cry. Swami knows everything!"

Nowadays, at Swami's suggestion, he is functioning as the Central Coordinator for the Sathya Sai Organizations in the East and fulfilling his destiny in the service of the Sai Spiritual Mission.

MALA, VIKSHEPA, AVARANA

In one of His discourses, Swami pointed out that man is gifted with intelligence and discernment. Yet, he is not able to recognize his True Self. The reason for this, said Swami, is the cumulative effect of the deeds (karma) done in previous lives. Because of good deeds, (Sath-Karma), one takes birth as a human being. However, if in this human birth, a person indulges in doing evil, like adultery, thievery, untruthfulness and so on, the consequences too will be evil. These are of three types of evil nature: Mala, Vikshepa and avarana. These obscure the spiritual vision of man and prevent him from recognizing the glorious form of his own True SElf (Swa-Swaroopa Jnan).

Swami then proceeded to elaborate what Mala, Vikshepa and avarana mean.

Mala is the cumulative effect of the evil deeds done during previous lives. As an instance in point here is a story. A diamond merchant was going on a business trip. He travelled on horse-back and as he rode fast, his bag containing diamonds dropped on the ground unnoticed. Two friends travelling behind him found it. At the sight of the precious diamonds, avarice took hold of their minds. Each wanted to grab it for himself. While the younger one kept watch over the bag, the other went searching for food. On the way, he got another vicious idea - to eliminate his friend altogether. Accordingly, he mixed poison in the food meant for his friend. He came back and told the waiting friend, "Dear younger brother, have your meal first and while you eat, I will keep watch on the gems." The younger one had his own plans. As the elder one bent over, the younger brother dealt a savage blow on his neck with a heavy sword. Jubilant that he was now the sole master of the gems, he ate his food with relish. But as it had been contaminated, he too died of poison. Although the two friends did get hold of the precious diamonds, they could not derive any benefit there from. It is 'Mala' that led them to evil conduct. The root cause of 'Mala' is evil thought and evil deed, which can be destroyed only through incessantly remembering and thinking of God. There is no other way.

Next is ***Vikshepa***, which means lack of steadiness of mind. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was serving as priest in the majestic temple of Goddess Kali in Dakshineshwar. That temple had been built by a pious lady called Rani Rasamani. She visited the temple one day and asked Ramakrishna to sing a song in praise of Devi. While he sang, devotees including Rasamani were moving their heads in tune with

the song. Paramahamsa suddenly stopped singing and gave a resounding slap on Rasamani's cheek. He scolded her, "Your body is here, but your mind is elsewhere - on property litigation in the High Court in Calcutta." She was noble and devout. So she took her chastisement in proper spirit, as a deserved punishment for her unsteadiness of mind, i.e., Vikshepa. To distance mind from Vikshepa, there is only one way - relentless practice of concentration and single-mindedness.

Now comes ***avarana.*** I am a student; I am a teacher; I am a Brahmin; I am a Kshathriya; I am a woman; I am a man; and so on. In this manner, a person falls into delusion " "I am this body." Ignorance (Ajnan) of this kind is avarana. If you meditate deeply and with discernment (Vivek), you will soon realize that you are neither a student, nor a teacher, nor a Brahmin, nor a Kshathriya, nor a female, nor a male. The Reality, the Truth is : You are the Embodiment of Athma. To recognize this reality is to get over avarana.

A pregnant tigress was crossing a river, when she suddenly gave birth to a cub. The mother was swept away by the rushing waters but the cub reached dry ground somewhere down-stream and joined a herd of sheep. Mixing with the sheep day after day, in the course of time, it totally forgot its true identity of a tiger. It ate grass as the sheep did. It bleated like the sheep. It completely lost consciousness of its natural and inherent strength and capability. Sometime later, a tiger attacked the herd and noticed the tiger cub in the midst of the herd and was surprised to see it behaving just like a sheep. The tiger caught hold of the cub and dragged it to the water pool. It pointed to the cub's image in

the water, "Look, you are not a sheep; you are a tiger. Recognize your true identity." Only then could the cub learn the truth. The only way to remove avarana is through total surrender to God (Daivarpana).

In his discourses, Swami addresses us as "Divya-Athma-Swaroopulara!" (Embodiments of the Divine Athma). He is thus, time and again, reminding us of our true identity. He is constantly exhorting to each one of us : "You are not merely a body of flesh and blood; you are the Embodiment of Athma."

We realize that mala, vikshepa and avarana can be got rid of by constantly having Swami's name dance on our tongues; i.e., by chanting His name all the time; firmly seating Swami on the altar of our heart; and leading spiritual, pure lives with the spiritual enlightenment Swami is blessing us with. Humble homage to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah

Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih

End of Chapter 14

Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya dheemahi thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

DAY 7 : WEDNESDAY

CHAPTER 15 - "I AM AWARE OF THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF EVERYONE"

"You may think that it is a marvellous phenomenon that the Supreme Being should come down to earth in human form. But if you are in My position, you will not be so wonder-struck. I am fully aware of the past, the present and the future of every one of you. That is why I do not get overwhelmed with pity. Not that I do not have compassion and love. My heart is certainly not made of stone. But if you shut the door of your heart, how can the waves of My sweet love penetrate beyond? You shed tears and say, "Swami, I am blind. I yearn to see Your divine form. Doesn't my distress melt Your heart?" When you see a blind person's misery, you hearts are moved. Does not my heart too feel pity? But as I know the entire background including the distressed person's earlier lives, My response is naturally different. If you too come to know of things that are known to Me, your reaction to that person's agony will also be different. What one reaps in this life is but the fruits of the seeds that he himself had sowed in previous lives. So, I allow him to undergo what he derived from his earlier evil deeds. Of course, performance of extenuatingly good deeds will mitigate the suffering to some extent. I am not the cause of either your happiness or misery. You have yourself fashioned these two manacles that weigh you down." ~ Baba ~

EVIL BEGETS EVIL

Once, a husband and wife accompanied by their two children

came to Prashanti Nilayam. The parents as well as the children were very handsome and the whole family made a

picture of beauty. They eagerly desired to meet Bhagavan personally. They say Col Joga Rao in that connection and requested him somehow to make it possible. Impressed by the good looks of the couple, Col Joga Rao felt that it would be very nice if Baba could give them an interview. So, he interceded with Baba on their behalf, mentioning also that everyone in the family was very handsome. Swami said, "You are speaking so highly about the beauty of the parents and their children. That is all right. But do you know that both the little ones are blind?" Col Joga Rao was taken aback. Swami had not seen the family yet. Joga Rao himself did not notice and could not imagine that the two lovely children were sightless. When he met those people again, he enquired about their children's lack of eyesight. He was distressed when he was told the ugly truth. The lady once again entreated Col Joga Rao to plead, on their behalf, with Swami to bless her children with sight. Moved by their pleasant

manner, Joga Rao raised the matter once again with Swami. He got no reply.

The next day, Swami came out of his place with the day's newspaper in hand. He gave it to Col Joga Rao and asked him to read a particular item. The item refers to a news story. In Bukkapatnam, two children's eyes were blinded by their stepmother. After reading the shocking news, Col Joga Rao stared at Swami. "What would you do if you were to deal with this incident?", asked Swami. Col Joga Rao answered instantly, "I will turn the heartless mother blind." Then Swami softly told him, "But God does not do so. On the other hand, He makes her children blind.... As for these two little ones, leave them to Me. They will certainly be happy. But what about their mother...?" Baba moved away from the place leaving Col Joga Rao stunned.

This brief conversation was all that happened. But Col Joga Rao realized in his mind that the puzzle of a universal mystery had been unravelled in a flash. What had he asked of Swami in favour of the couple? What did Swami mean by drawing his notice to this day's news-item? And what is the profound significance of Swami's conversation with him? Evidently, Swami did not wish to reveal anything directly to the unfortunate mother and add to her mental anguish. It all added up to this: every person would have to suffer retribution for past sins.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba says, "God is just like a postman, who takes out of his bag letter after letter and hands each one at the appropriate address. Members in one house read their letter and burst out in joy. Another

household suffers misery with what it received. As for the postman, he is least concerned with the contents of the letters he delivers. His role is merely to transmit each letter to the correct addressee. God too does the same!"

"PICKING UP THE FOOD THROWN AWAY THEN"

Accompanied by Swami Karunyananda, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba once went to Dharmakshethra in Mumbai. He stayed in his apartment on the upper floor while Karunyananda was given a room situated on the ground floor right beneath Baba's room. Some prominent persons of Mumbai were coming to meet Bhagavan. The staircase they used was adjoining the ground floor room; and to avoid being disturbed, Karunyananda bolted his door from inside. As he looked out from his window, he saw a very disturbing scene. Just outside the compound wall, some children were vying with stray dogs to grab crumbs of food from discarded leaf-plates. The scene filled him with surprise as well as distress. This is the age when God Himself has incarnated on this earth and is moving, in flesh and blood, among human beings. What's more, on that very day, He was present right in that very building. Is it not ironical that human beings were to fight with street dogs for snatching a few discarded crumbs of food? Just as these thoughts passed through his minds, there was a gentle touch on his shoulder. He turned round and found Sri Sathya Sai smiling and looking into his eyes.

Karunyananda was flustered and said, "Swami, I bolted my door from inside. How could you enter the room?" Baba countered, "If I want to come in, can bolts stand in my way? I

have come to take you for meals." Then Karunyananda told Baba about what was agitating his mind. "Swami, I am troubled by a small doubt. You are God incarnate and right now present here bodily. And just look there, behind the wall, children are fighting with street dogs for picking up mean crumbs of food from the garbage. How come, Swami?" Bhagavan explained patiently, "They disdainfully ate from tables heavily laden with every kind of rich food, pecking a little from this and a little from that plate. They threw away much more than they ever ate, contemptuously discarding precious food. In this birth, they are picking up what they had earlier so recklessly wasted and consigned to the garbage heap!"

Subsequently, on the occasion of the World Conference of Sathya Sai Organizations that took place in Prashanti Nilayam, Swami Karunyananda addressed the audience. Swami was present on the dais. In his speech, Karunyananda referred to the above incident causing considerable surprise all around.

In His discourse that followed, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba clarified, "Two birds are sitting on a branch of a tree. One is eating the tree's fruit. The other is just watching like a mere witness. This incident was mentioned in one of the Upanishads. The inner meaning of this is : the tree is the body; the fruits are worldly happiness and sorrow; the fruit-eater is the Soul; the witness is the Supreme Being (Paramathma). The birds are no doubt appearing as two distinct entities but actually they are truly the same. The spiritual essence of man is the Supreme Principle's 'Reflection or Shadow Vision.' In Baba's own words :

"Paramathma's Abhasa-Roopam is Jeevathma"). Even so, experiencing happiness and sorrow is the lot of Jeevathma; they do not touch Paramathma. Paramathma is only a witness." These words of Bhagavan Baba elaborate the inner meaning of the beautiful Upanishadic parade of two birds on a tree.

OCEAN OF MERCY

Despite all that has been stated earlier about past deeds engendering either retribution or reward in the present life, it is a fact that if Bhagavan Wills to shower mercy and compassion, His kindness knows no limits. It is so spontaneous that it is pointless to search for its cause. In this context, it is relevant to refer to what Swami recounted on 4th July 1996. It was a heart-warming tale and moved every single person in the gathering.

"The boy who spoke here first," said Swami, hails from Simla

in Himachal Pradesh. His younger brother also is studying in the Primary School here. About ten years ago, when I was in Brindavan, their mother was brought to Me on a stretcher all the way from Himachal Pradesh. I put my arms around the boys and drew them close. I told their mother, 'These are My children. From now on, you need not worry about them at all.' She too gave her word to Swami " 'Sai Matha, I am entrusting my sons to You.' And she breathed her last. I brought the boys here and enrolled them in the Primary School. From that day right up to this day, they never shed a tear. Their mother passed away; their father comes but rarely. Everybody left them to Swami's care; after all Swami Himself is looking after them. That is exactly what Saranagathi means, total surrender. I see these boys morning and evening every day and enquire about their welfare. They never experience, even for a moment, the misery of losing their mother.

"One day, the lady warden of the hostel brought the younger boy to Me saying that he was grieving for his mother, weeping for her and refusing to eat. He was then five years old and was in the first standard. I took him to the interview room, put a ring on his finger, did this and that to amuse him until he forgot his grief and became cheerful. Ever since, he is always seen smiling and laughing! Children's hearts are pure and clear like crystal. This shows how much courage and strength love can bestow on the loved ones.

"Could these boys have been so content and cheerful anywhere else? They are so full of happiness and joy because they are with Swami. Swami's love is not one mother's love but is the love of a thousand mothers. I personally look after

every single detail. Unable to understand this, you worry, "Swami has not looked at me or talked to me." Despite innumerable responsibilities that I shoulder, I find time to look after and enquire about every single child. The boy who has spoken a little earlier said, as you have all heard, 'I lost only a single mother but I have gained the motherly love of a thousand mothers.' That is why when commencing his talk, he addressed Swami, 'My Mother Sai'. It is such ardent faith that protects them and blesses them with complete success in their lives."

NAMA SMARAN AND ROOPA DHYAN

For eight long years, a foreign devotee at Prashanti Nilayam had been confined to a wheel chair for he had lost use of his legs. Nevertheless, a pleasant smile was always lighting up the brave man's face. Prior to his affliction, he used to exercise and actively participate in sports and games. But fate forced him into this dependence on the wheel chair. Once several visitors from his native land were sitting together in the audience hall. Swami invited all of them into the interview room. Since this handicapped person was tied down to his wheel-chair and was also at a different place, he could not move in along with the group, who had rushed into the interview room. He too was from the same country. Should not Swami have called him as well? He was wondering and eagerly looking towards Swami. Meanwhile, Swami had already passed him by and went ahead a little further; but suddenly, He turned back and called out to him, "Oh, you also go inside." He was thrilled and began propelling his chair towards the room. The ever-compassionate Bhagavan ordered him, "Not like that. Get up and go walking!" The poor man was shocked. He stopped

nevertheless and tried painfully to get out of his chair. Laboriously, he freed himself, stumbled a little but soon pulled himself together. He broke down. Unable to control his spasms of weeping, he threw himself at the Lotus Feet of Swami. Eight years of thapas and suffering was thus crowned with glorious fulfillment.

RELEASE FROM RETRIBUTION

Swami said on one occasion, "You may be thinking that one will have to suffer in this birth for the evil deeds done in past lives; and that no amount of God's compassion can exempt you from it. But I am giving you my word that you need not have to undergo the consequences of previous karma." Hence, He is worshipped, 'Sarva papa kshayakaraya namah.'

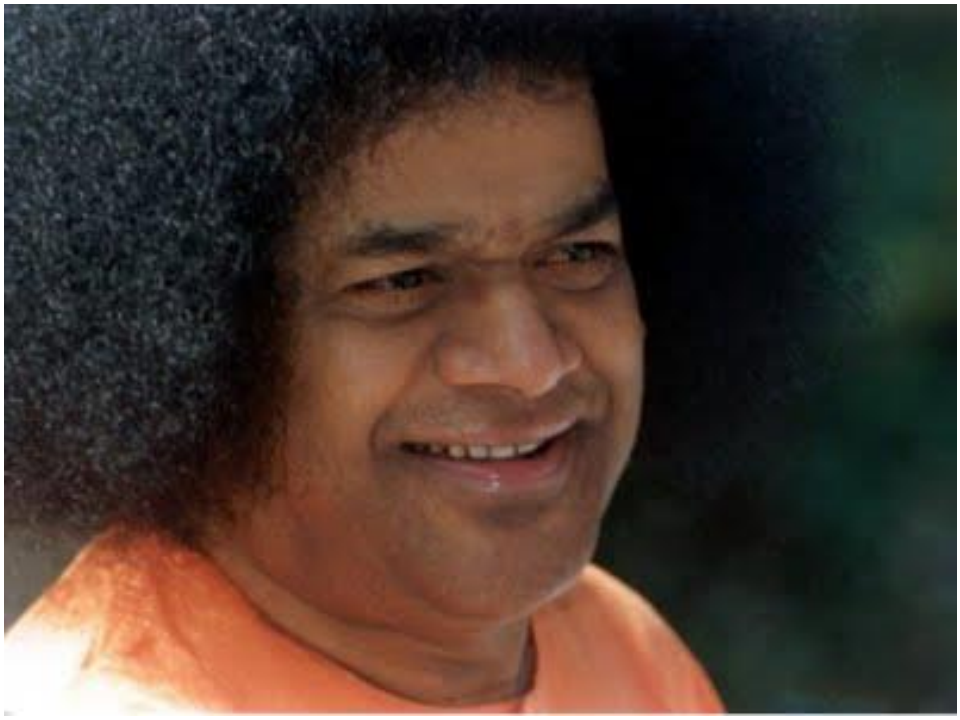
True enough. Look at all those who are suffering from disease, and have gathered in Puttaparthi, sitting and waiting for Baba. They have totally surrendered themselves at Swami's Lotus Feet. Having left all their cares in the hands of Swami, they do not seem to be suffering at all. If they were somewhere else, the intensity of their illness would have made them miserable. They would have been experiencing the agony of hell. Here, as they wait looking forward to the supreme happiness of having Swami's darshan, they suffer not; they are lost in anticipation. And during darshan, they are transported to heavenly bliss. They forget themselves, lost to their plans and aches. After darshan is over, they relive in their wonderful experience; rumination adds to that pleasure and prolongs it. They meditate on the form of Swami. Conversing with others, sharing of experiences and recollecting the sweetness of Swami's words, deeds and leelas - their time literally flies. Then, they begin looking

forward to the next day's darshan with hope, anticipation, expectation and imagination. Devotees never know passage of hours in Prashanti Nilayam. When do they find time to experience retribution? They are shielded and insulated from suffering and sorrow just as a patient under anesthesia is protected from pain. The period of suffering retribution passes off smoothly with hearing (sravan), remembering (smaran), contemplating (manan), meditating (chinthan), viewing (darshan) and touching (sparshan) - in other words, in filling one's body and soul with Swami, His divinity and glory!

Entry into Prashanti Nilayam, both physically and metaphorically, is nothing but Pariharam, that is, remedy for and relief from sorrow of every kind.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 15
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 16 - SIGNIFICANCE OF NAMASMARAN



Hare nama Hare nama Hare nama Aiva Kevalam
Kalow nastheiva nastheiva gathir anyatha

"Chanting of the Lord's name is the only way to liberation in the Kali Age. God's name only will redeem us. Any mighty task can be achieved by chanting the divine name." ~ Baba ~

Namasmaran means remembering or chanting God's name repeatedly. It is one of the spiritual practices enjoined on an aspirant endeavouring to reach God. The importance Swami attaches to it is illustrated by an incident.

A devotee asked, 'Swami, we often hear about total surrender (saranagathi). How is one to accomplish it' Swami

answered softly. 'Bangaru, saranagathi is beyond you; why do you bother about it? Resort to namasmaran. God Himself will be at your beck and call.

Swami once explained the special significance of namasmaran, â€œIt is the most sublime of all the spiritual practices. It consists of japam (chanting of God's name repeatedly); it is the most infallible penance (thapas). Kuchela could attain Lord Sri Krishna's grace only through namasmaran. When you do namasmaran, intone the name with fervour, deep devotion and love. It bestows on you immense benefit. In this Kali Yuga, namasmaran is enough to earn salvation and release from the otherwise unbroken cycle of birth and death.

Nama smaran is the one and only divine medicine capable of curing you of lack of mental equanimity, avarice and other ills which torment you. It gives you abiding peace and contentment.

The name you choose can be any one of the thousands of names of God. Or, it can be any one of the names now in common use in any religion, country or region of the world, or in any section of devotees. Select any name and devote at least five minutes every day for namasmaran; make it a part of your daily routine. It will give you immense benefit.

THULASAMMA

A long time ago, a devotee called Thulasamma was residing in Prashanti Nilayam. Once while she was going to her native place by auto rickshaw, the vehicle dashed against a wayside tree and overturned at a deserted place. She was seriously

wounded in her wrist. While falling down from the auto rickshaw, she loudly cried, 'Sai ram!] Within moments of accident, a car arrived at that lonely spot. The driver picked up both Thulasamma and the auto-driver and took them to his house. The lady was aware that her wound was serious enough. But, as she came to know later, she had been rescued from a more terrible fate.

During interrogation, the auto-driver revealed some startling details. When he noticed expensive gold ornaments on her body, he was tempted to rob them. That was why he drove to that isolated spot and intentionally crashed into the tree. He expected Thulasamma to become unconscious and he would be able to get away with her ornaments. But at the moment of impact, she suddenly cried out, 'Sai Ram' That namasmaran had the effect of changing his mind. He was surprised that just at the moment of her terrible ordeal, she could utter God's name so fervently. He felt that she must be very noble and pious and that he should not rob such a lady. Moreover, although normally the spot was most of the time unfrequented, surprisingly on that specific day somebody came in a car at the crucial moment and ruined his plan. The auto-driver was disturbed at this coincidence. Was it divine intercession? The poor fellow shuddered at the very thought.

The driver confessed all this to Thulasamma, narrated every detail of the incident and expressed sincere remorse. He did not stop there. From that time onwards, he became friendly and very close to her. He would visit her often and enquire about her welfare. He became, as it were, an intimate friend in fact, a well-meaning relative. This episode highlights the

power of namasmaran.

NAMA SMARAN MEANS SUMMONING GOD

Pedda Bottu, the great devotee of Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba, of whom we read about earlier, often asked Him, â€œSwami, what is meditation (dhyan) and how to do it? Swami used to put her off. He would merely say, don't bother about Dhyan. You are doing namasmaran. That is good enough. One night she was sleeping under a tree opposite Swami's residence. As it began to drizzle, she removed herself from there and prepared to sleep in the verandah outside Swami's room. As she was making her bed, she said to herself, as a matter of habit, 'Om Sri Sai Ram.' Swami came out and pulled her up, â€œyou stupid, won't you allow Me to sleep? Pedda Botu said, Swami, who stopped You from sleeping? Swami retorted, 'When you are summoning Me, how can I go to bed and sleep?' The poor lady explained, 'I am in the habit of doing namasmaran and uttered, 'Om Sri Sai Ram,' within myself. ;I did not intend to call you.' Bhagavan called her, 'What does that japam mean? It amounts to calling Me. Namasmaran is no different from summoning the God.'

NAMA SMARAN MEANS TELEPHONING GOD

Moorthy, Sri Kasturi's son, was doing research in Geology. In that connection, he had to tour forest areas in Assam. On one occasion, when he was alone, a wild bear noticed him and began closing in on him. Moorthy fled for his life but the animal continued to chase him. As he ran over some rocks in his desperate flight to safety, he tripped and fell down but continued to cry loudly, "Baba, Baba." Within moments a motor truck appeared there from nowhere and Moorthy found safety by getting into it. After a few months, he

happened to be in Prashanti Nilayam. Swami told him, "I received your phone call and despatched a truck. Did it reach you in time?"

MAYA, THE TERRIBLE DOG

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba once described the power of Maya in a metaphorical way. He said, â€œGod is the Master of maya (delusion; illusion; ignorance). Maya is like a terrible dog standing guard at the entrance of the Godâ€™s home and does not allow outsiders to come near Him. If you are earnest about reaching God, there are only two ways. The first course is to put on the form of the Master. Then the dog does not harm you at all. This is known as saroopya, that is, assuming God's form. But you should not make the slightest mistake; otherwise the dog will not spare you.

The second course is to cry out for the Master in a loud voice. He will hear your cry. He comes to you, receives you with open arms and, holding your hand, leads you inside with overflowing kindness. This is called sameepya that is, being in closest company with God. The dog will not do any harm to you, as you are with his Master. Being God's pet dog, maya obeys Him. If He Wills it not to give you trouble, you will not be touched; you will know no fear.

What a simple and beautiful parable Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai has given us! He has revealed how He, of His own violation, surrenders to His devotee. How easy is the second course! The devotee has only to call God most earnestly, with all his heart, with agony in his voice, with yearning suffusing his whole being. This is namasmaran. Millions of Sai devotees have found through personal experience that God responds

to namasmaran and presents Himself before His devotee with boundless mercy and compassion.

Baba’s exhortation is that incessant namasmaran of a deity so elevates the devotee that he attains the form of that deity. Bhagavan says that incessant smaran of Lord Sri Rama’s name by his brother Bharatha, resulted in Ramayana, in the latter looking like Sri Rama to all. A similar thing happened with Uddhava in Sri Maha Bhagavat who did uninterrupted smaran of Lord Sri Krishna’s name.

EARNEST PRAYER

"When you do namasmaran, fill it with great longing, anguish and love for God. God always looks mainly for the intensity in His devotee's prayer," said Baba and illustrated the statement with the following charming story.

"Adi Sankara was then a little child. Their family deity was Goddess Raja Rajeswari. Sankara's father used to worship the Devi every day. One day, he had to go out to some place on business. Therefore, he entrusted the task of Devi worship to the little boy.

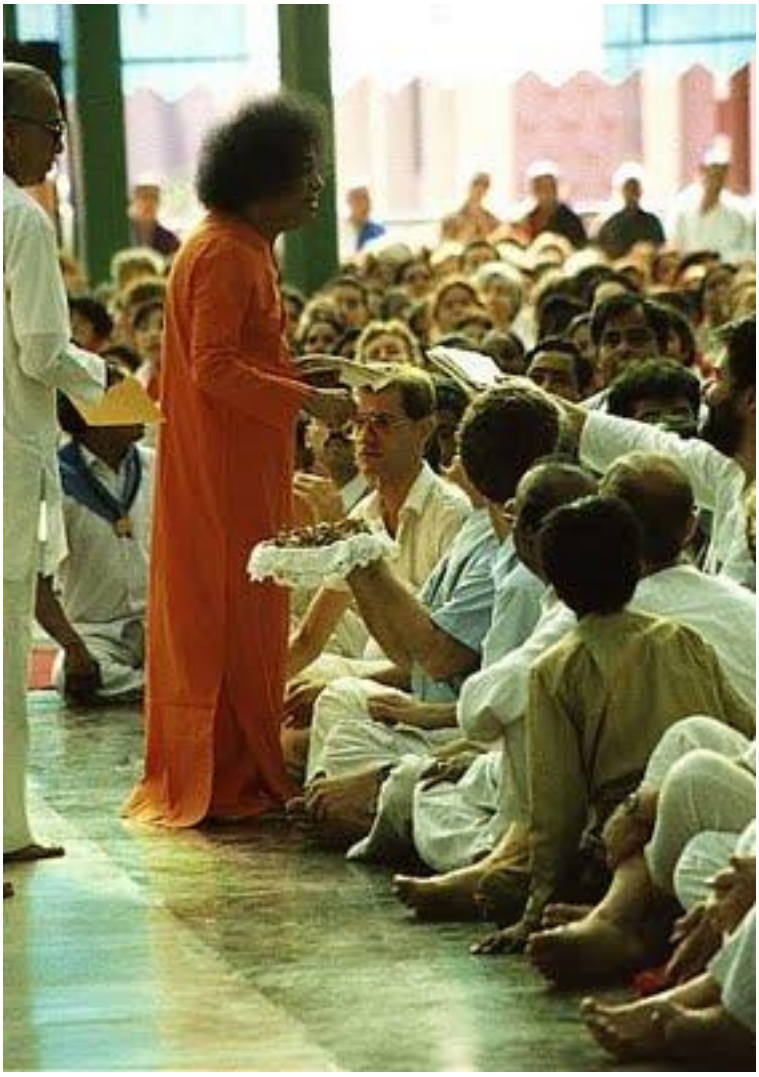
"The child performed worship as usual and ritually offered milk to the deity. He waited and waited in expectation. He had always believed that Devi was actually drinking the milk offered by his father every day. So he waited for Devi to take milk. But it did not happen. In great anguish and with tears flowing down his cheeks, the little boy earnestly pleaded, "What is the matter, my Mother? Won't You accept milk offered by me? Won't You bless me with Your grace?" The motherly heart of the Supreme Mother melted in

compassion and pity on seeing the agony in the tender child's heart! And she gulped down the whole of the milk that the little devotee offered.

"Sankara knows that the milk which his father daily offers to Devi was treated as holy; and after pooja, his father would give a little of that as 'theertham' (liquid prasadam) to every member of the family. But on this day, not a drop remained for such distribution. The Goddess has taken all in a single gulp. He feared that other members of the family would suspect him of having swallowed the entire quantity of milk. Overcome by shame and desperation, Sankara wept. Moved by his distress again, the Merciful Devi filled the container full with milk. She did not pour milk from her hand; the milk that she gave came directly from the Divine Mother's breasts. Sankara's agonised prayer was thus amply fulfilled by the Mother."

An exactly similar incident happened very recently, which Swami narrated as follows " 'A person, who is now here among you, suddenly cried out, 'Swami!' in an excited and loud voice. I senses the distress, faith and yearning in that cry. What happened was that the saree of his wife had caught fire. Flames raged. Stunned by terror, she could not remember Me. The husband was helpless and desperate and cried out for Me. Their place is 200 miles away from here. The moment I heard the call, I was there and put out the flames before much harm could be done. What drew Me there was the deep anguish in that cry."

"I AM EVER WAITING FOR YOU"



One day, during Swami's public audience, a devotee was continuously calling Him in great anguish, "Swami, Swami!" Swami noticed him and invited him into the interview room. He was longing for Swami's love, for Swami's divine proximity and for an opportunity of conversing with Swami. Swami entered the room, closed the door and was bolting it. The devotee could not hold himself any longer. He blurted out, "Swami, I have been waiting for you for the last three weeks. For three long weeks, Swami!" Swami turned around and said affectionately, "Bangaru, do you know for how many years I have been waiting for you?" The man was

thunder-struck! Bhagavan? Actually waiting? For him? He was overwhelmed at the thought. Unable to bear the impact of the flood of Baba's love, he started weeping.

Yes, it is a fact that Swami is waiting every moment for each one of us, wondering, "When will he come, when?" He says, "Whenever you come to me, Bangaru, you will find Me awaiting your arrival." But the devotees excuse themselves, "Swami, I cannot come just now. I am deeply entangled in many things. I find myself enslaved. I am unable to come at present, Swami." Bhagavan is indulgent. He reassures His devotees, "Don't worry at all, Bangaru. It does not matter when you will be able to come. Take your own time. But so far as I am concerned, I will always be awaiting you." That arrival may take several lifetimes or births even!

Several devotees plead for a personal interview with Swami. "Swami, Swami, interview please," they cry out. He answers, "Wait, wait." It does not mean merely that they should await their turn; it also means that they are too 'weighty', too heavy! They have to long for many more days, or even many more years in some cases; they have to suffer the agony of not being called to his presence. After they undergo some thapas. After some penance, Swami invites them for interview. That is to say, the seeker should first 'lose weight'; through austerity, self-mortification, incessant namasmaran, and meditation on Swami; he has to unburden himself of the load of evils like attachment and hatred (Raga-dvesha) which are weighing him down. When the devotee prepares himself in this manner, when the burden of 'weight' is shed and he becomes 'light', Swami would certainly invite him to come close to Him.

Swami Himself explained this in a different manner. He said, "The more you come close to me, the more you earn my love, you become more likely to 'burn'." What will be burnt are our evils, defects and impurities. Such a burning leads to spiritual purification, to refinement. As the process of burning is accompanied by Swami's love, which acts a shield, the aspirant is able to withstand the fiery ordeal.

"THE OPPRESSED ARE MY CHILDREN"

When Sri Kasturi was Principal of a college in Davangere, Karnataka, he had an attendant called Ananthappa. That man had great devotion for Swami. He would gather pooja materials like flowers, fruit, joss sticks and camphor, needed for the bhajans in his master's home. To ensure that they were of the best quality, he would scout the entire market, shop by shop. Standing in front of Swami's picture in the house, he would implore him most pitiably to let a flower drop into his hand. He would be alone in front of Swami's picture conversing with Him. When a faded garland removed from Swami's image was given to him, he would treat it as holy prasadam. One day, Swami gave one of his photographs, a large one, to Sri Kasturi and told him, "Take this to Davangere and place it in Ananthappa's temple." Ananthappa's humble shanty truly became a temple by Baba's word! Vibhuthi was dropping out of that photograph and countless people came seeking it. Once, Swami remarked also that Ananthappa was like Vibheeshana in Sri Lanka (in Ramayana).

The husband of Ananthappa's younger daughter was working in the Department of Railways in Mysore. The

couple stayed in an obscure house in Bangalore. That fellow was of a suspicious nature; he doubted even his wife's chastity. He harassed her incessantly. She was confined to a room like a prisoner. Nobody could intervene and bring him to the path of reason.

Unable to put up with such persecution, the poor woman implored her husband to take her to Sri Sathya Sai Baba in Puttaparthi. If Baba declared her to be chaste, she said, her husband should let her be in peace; otherwise, she would end her life in Puttaparthi itself.

Ananthappa, his wife, their daughter and son-in-law travelled to Puttaparthi. Swami was all kindness. He invited them into the interview room and told Ananthappa's son-in-law, "Your wife is illustrious and as pure as Sita, wife of Lord Sri Rama. She is like Goddess Parvathi, consort of Lord Siva." He tried to reason with him. But the fellow did not relish Swami's words and became abusive. Swami threw him out and closed the door on him. He advised Ananthappa not to worry. He also assured him that the man would surely mend his ways soon and live in happiness with his wife.

On the way back, they reached Penugonda late in the night. They sat in the railway station awaiting the midnight train from Guntakal. Ananthappa's son-in-law went blabbering and rubbishing holy men and mendicants. Ananthappa was distressed because the man had not obviously changed his evil ways. The train steamed in at midnight. The boy helped Ananthappa, his wife and daughter into a third class coach of the train and boarded a first class coach himself. He could travel in a first class coach, as he was a railway employee.

At about 1 am, i.e., an hour after midnight, the train stopped at a station called Thondi Bhavi. Suddenly, Ananthappa's son-in-law began screaming in pain and moaning loudly. Hearing the disturbing noise, the guard came into the coach. Railway staff in the station also gathered to find out what's happened, and what the problem was. The fellow was found rubbing his cheeks. Terror-stricken, he was furtively looking all around. The guard asked him, "Who entered this compartment and slapped your cheeks?"

Weeping and moaning, he got down from the train, went and sat in the Station Master's room and told him what had happened. "About 6 miles ahead of Thondi Bhavi station," he said, "lights in the compartment were suddenly switched on. I got up and sat on my berth. There was reddish illumination as if Sai Baba had filled the whole space. Baba started slapping my cheeks. He was all over the space around me and I was receiving slaps from every direction. As he beat on my cheeks, he was saying, "You refuse to believe Me, when I say that your wife is innocent and chaste? Will you stop harassing her or not? She is My child. Not only she, all the oppressed are My children. Will you obey Me?" Will you?" As the train approached this station, the reddish illumination disappeared. Normal bright light took its place."

After this incident, there was radical transformation in the couple's lives. They started living amicably in complete harmony and love.

After a few months, Bhagavan Baba was conversing with some devotees. He said that Shirdi Sai Baba would often

display anger but this present avathar was one of love. Sri Kasturi meekly interjected, "Swami, in this present avathar, did You not beat anyone?" Baba replied, "I am now the personification of love!" But Sri Kasturi persisted, "In this avathar, haven't You beaten anybody else?" To that Swami said, "Are you referring to Ananthappa's son-in-law? What I did to him was only out of love for him." Sri Kasturi said, "Swami's love and grace were amply showered on that poor, simple girl." The ever- compassionate Baba added, "Yes, on that son-in-law too!"

GOAT AND MIND

A king called several villagers together and gifted each of them, a goat with an order that every animal should be well fed by its keeper. But he imposed just a single condition. When the goats were brought back to him when ordered, they should not be eating green leaves at all. In fact, they should display total distaste for leaves. As an incentive to the villagers, he announced a reward of ten thousand rupees to the villagers who would successfully tend the goats as directed.

The villagers thought that if a goat was fully fed, and if its stomach was full, it could take nothing more; it would refuse even green leaves. So they made it a habit to feed the animals so fully that they would not wish to touch anything. A girl, however, followed a different method of training her goat. She placed green leaves before the goat and when the animal was about to feed on them, she gave a beating on its mouth with a stick. Repetition of this procedure had the effect of deterring the animal from touching green leaves even when they were placed right before it, although its

stomach was not full.

Sometime later, the king ordered the villagers to present the goats for inspection. He found that the goats started eating leaves as soon as they were placed before them. But there was one goat that was not even looking at the leaves. Instead, it was looking at the stick its keeper held. The king was delighted and promptly presented ten thousand rupees to the girl who successfully trained that particular goat in the manner ordered by him.
Control of mind also requires similar hard training and severe discipline. Arjuna, eminent that he was, admitted

"Chanchalam Hi Manah Krishna! Pramadee Balavath-Dridham."

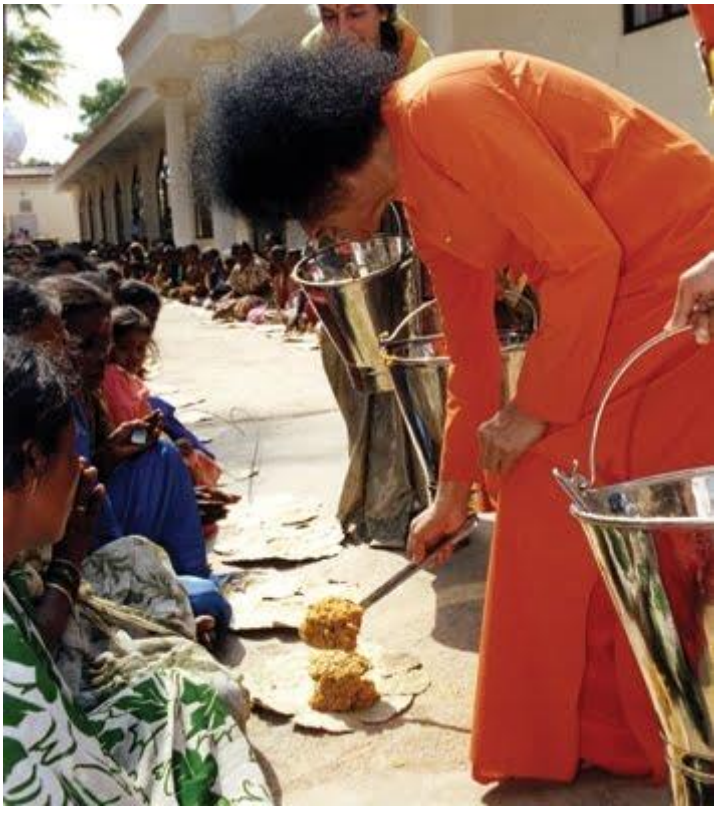
Oh Krishna, mind is unsteady and fickle, confusing, strong and inflexible. He prayed to Krishna to enlighten him of how to subdue and control such a difficult and unruly mind. There is no doubt that the only way to conquer the mind is to practice arduous and relentless spiritual discipline (sadhana).

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 16
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 17 - MANAVA SEVA IS MADHAVA SEVA

(SERVICE TO MAN IS SERVICE TO GOD)

Service is the most difficult of the nine steps to inner reality... It is basically action arising out of the yearning to win the grace of God... It is the most important step to erase ego... Through service alone can man attain mastery of... senses, the passions and predilections, and through that, reach divinity itself. I have come to teach you the proper attitude of service - for love expresses as service, and God is love... Service to man leads to the discovery of man as God. ~ Baba ~



Swami addressed a huge gathering of His devotees who were anxiously planning to celebrate Bhagavan's sixtieth birthday on a grand scale. He said, "Spirituality has no

meaning to a person suffering from hunger. To the hunger-stricken, bring God in the form of food; to the distressed and distracted, in the form of peace; to the sick, as medicine; and to the afflicted, a remedy for the affliction. Only thus can spirituality enter one's heart. Anything done otherwise produces agnostics and atheists instead of believers. Before you celebrate My sixtieth birthday, adopt at least six thousand villages and transform them into ideal villages. The spiritual benefit deriving from japa (silent repetition of a manthra), thapas (penance), yajna (oblation) and yaga (religious sacrifice) will accrue from divine love alone. And of all the means to attain divine love, seva (service to mankind) is unrivalled.

"You must grasp the essentiality of My prema thathwa (love). Whatever Sai does, or thinks, or says, or sees, it is entirely for your sake and not for Sai's sake. I have no happiness of My own; your happiness is My happiness. I have no desires whatsoever. You may think Sai is doing this or doing that. Nothing is for Myself. Everything is for you. Believe it or not, not a paisa is being spent for Me. Whatever is being done is for society. For fifty-six years now, not even a paisa has been spent for getting a single shirt made for Me. I wear only those clothes that loving devotees offer to Me. The shirt I am wearing at this moment has been given by a student - Radhakrishna. The thought that I want something for Myself never occurred to Me, nor does it occur now. Such a thought will never come to My mind in future too. Whatever I Will, it is for the welfare of the world. Understand this clearly. Develop enthusiasm in the various programmes and activities and actively participate in social service.

"It is important that you carry out Swami's ideals and activities more particularly in villages than in towns. Minimise your own expenses and utilise maximum amounts on providing facilities needed by villagers. If facilities are adequately provided in every village, Bharatiya tathwa (Indian ethos) and Bharatiya samskrithi (Indian culture) will effectively reach one and all.

"Oh, Embodiments of Divine Self! (Divya-athma Swaroo-pulara!) You may not be able to see but I see everything as scenes moving before my eyes. The very same persons who are today unable to understand Swami's thathwa are destined to experience it, in tears, sometime in future. The Sai tathwa or Sai philosophy is very shortly going to spread throughout the world. Swami is Himself holding it back tightly. But once it is let loose, it permeates the entire world like an irresistible force. The world will be transformed into Prashanti Nilayam. Realize the essentiality of Swami and come forward to implement Swami's ideals. You will get no such opportunities later. You will not find it possible to get so close to Swami. Millions and millions of people will rush here. Those days are coming very soon. So from this day onwards, try to earn Swami's love and compassion and fulfill your lives by taking up suitable activities in the service of the mankind."

"TAKE ONE STEP TOWARDS ME; I WILL TAKE A HUNDRED TOWARDS YOU"

This was the time when there were severe problems in Bosnia and hundreds and thousands of refugees were sheltered in specially built camps, who were waiting return of peace. A Bosnian woman, an ardent devotee of Baba, felt it

her duty to do some service to the unfortunate refugees. She carried baskets of bread and packets of biscuits in her van over a long distance and distributed them in the camps. She also gave each of them a packet of vibhuthi and a photograph of Swami. While eating, they were looking at Swami's photograph and talking among themselves in their own language. She could not follow what they talked to each other. She was inquisitive to know in particular, what they said while looking at Swami's image. She therefore sought help from the driver of her van. He went to them and returned after a while. He told her what they were saying to each other. "This man (in the picture) has been giving us bread and biscuits every day. But today, apparently he gave them to her and asked her to distribute them." She was very much surprised to hear these words.

In a meeting held during the summer training classes in Brindavan in 1996, that Bosnian woman was permitted by Swami to speak. She narrated the above incident and added, "If we take one step forward for doing good, Swami will be there ahead of us all the time."

HANUMAN AND VIBHEESHAN IN DISCOURSE

Vanaras of Ramayan were born as monkeys. Nevertheless, they served God as humble servants, and gained relief from the cycle of birth and death, having been blessed with the good fortune of seeing God in their midst. Human beings are by no means inferior to vanaras. Why then do they not devote their lives to worship of God and meditation?

It is not enough to remember (smaran) God. One should enter, heart and soul into divine activity. Hanuman and

Vibheeshan became good friends. One day, Vibheeshan approached Hanuman in great distress and said, 'Hanuman, how fortunate you are! Every day, you do smaran of Lord Rama and have fully earned Lord Rama's grace. No doubt I too have been doing smaran of Sri Rama for a long time. But I am not blessed with the opportunity of seeing Lord Sri Rama (darshan)'.

Hanuman explained the position, 'You are no doubt doing smaran of Sri Rama. But did you ever participate in Sri Rama's activities? How can you earn Sri Rama's grace without doing that? It is now a full ten months since Devi Sita has been in Lanka. Did you ever console her and try to alleviate her suffering? Did you meet her and have her darshan even once? Did you ever think of some way to relieve her agony? If you had done any of these, it would have amounted to service to Lord Rama. You have failed to avail of the fine opportunity that has come your way. As for me, I have dedicated my life to Sri Rama, chanting Sri Rama's

name with my mouth and doing Lord Rama's work with my hands."
While describing the above discourse between the two devotees of Lord Rama, Bhagavan Sathya Sai concluded, "Therefore, our conduct should always be : Ram in heart; kam (work, service) in hand - Dil Me Ram; Hath Me Kam." Life dedicated to these two principles is truly fulfilled (sarthak).

Bhagavan Baba once said, "You are not doing service for others. You are doing it for yourselves to the God in you, the God who is equally present in others."

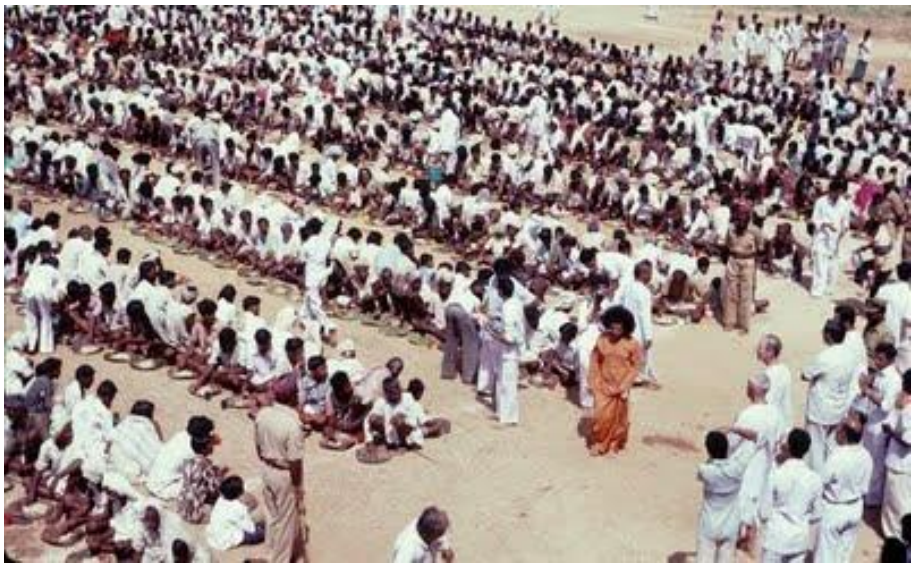
SERVICE LEADS TO HEAVEN

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai attaches immense value to willing and selfless service. In fact, He declared that it is the most supreme of all spiritual efforts (sadhana). He said: "Many distressed persons flock to Prashanti Nilayam having lost their peace of mind due to various problems. Among them are some persons who are bodily and mentally ill. My job is to treat everyone. While the doctor finishes the principal treatment, nurses, compounders and attenders take over and do the rest of the job. In the same way, I am providing you, volunteers, and opportunities for service.

"Na Karmana, Na Prajaya, Dhanena,
Thyagenaikena Amruthathwa Manashuh"

"Neither spiritual deeds as ordained by scriptures, not begetting worthy offspring, nor earning wealth will confer relief from the cycle of birth and death. Sacrifice alone can bring immortality (amrithathwa). This is the truth

proclaimed by the Vedas. Mental readiness to do sacrifice (thyaga buddhi) coupled with absolute selflessness should mark one's service. That is the only highway to reach Parama Pada (God's abode).



"Service (seva) occupies the most exalted position among all kinds of sadhana. God Himself has incarnated in human form to serve mankind through resuscitation of dharma, and He is undertaking numerous programmes of service. In such a situation, if man too comes forward to dedicate himself to selfless service, there can be no doubt that God's grace will be assured.

"It is not necessary that service should be confined only to the precincts of Prashanti Nilayam. Serve the suffering, the poor and the needy wherever you find them - in your village, or the place to which you go on pilgrimage, or anywhere else, and at any time. Normally, water by itself costs nothing. But combined with milk, the same water gains in value. In the same manner, if you add a bit of your service to any of the holy activities of Swami, your contribution acquires greater weight and significance.

"Once Lord Sri Krishna asked his poet-saint devotee,

Suradas, what would he desire to have. And He quickly added, "Leave it. Will you agree to be My servitor?' Suradas humbly replied, 'Krishna, if I become Your servant, it may generate ego in me. Moreover, what service can I do to You? There are innumerable persons who possess the necessary devotion, ability, competence and also facilities for doing service to You. However, any number of Your lowly servitors are there who themselves need succour and help. Bless me with the good fortune of serving such unfortunate persons." "If you would like to please Me and satisfy Me, you need only to see Me in every living being; serve all living beings as you would serve Me and worship Me. That alone is the most appropriate procedure of worship. That alone is the holy path that brings you to Me."

MAINTAIN SPIRITUALITY THROUGHOUT LIFE

Speaking to students in Kodaikanal, Bhagavan Baba once narrated a delightful parable, which was as amusing as it was profound.

"Once all vegetables in the world entered into a dispute about which of them was the greatest. Unable to come to an agreement, they prayed to Lord Brahma, Lord Sri Maha Vishnu and Lord Maheshwara to intercede and decide. Responding to their prayers, the three Gods came down to earth. They heard every vegetable with all the sympathy, patience and understanding that the sensitive issue deserved. Finally, they decided that a particular vegetable was the greatest. What is that? The humble onion!

"All other vegetables were astounded. Each of them

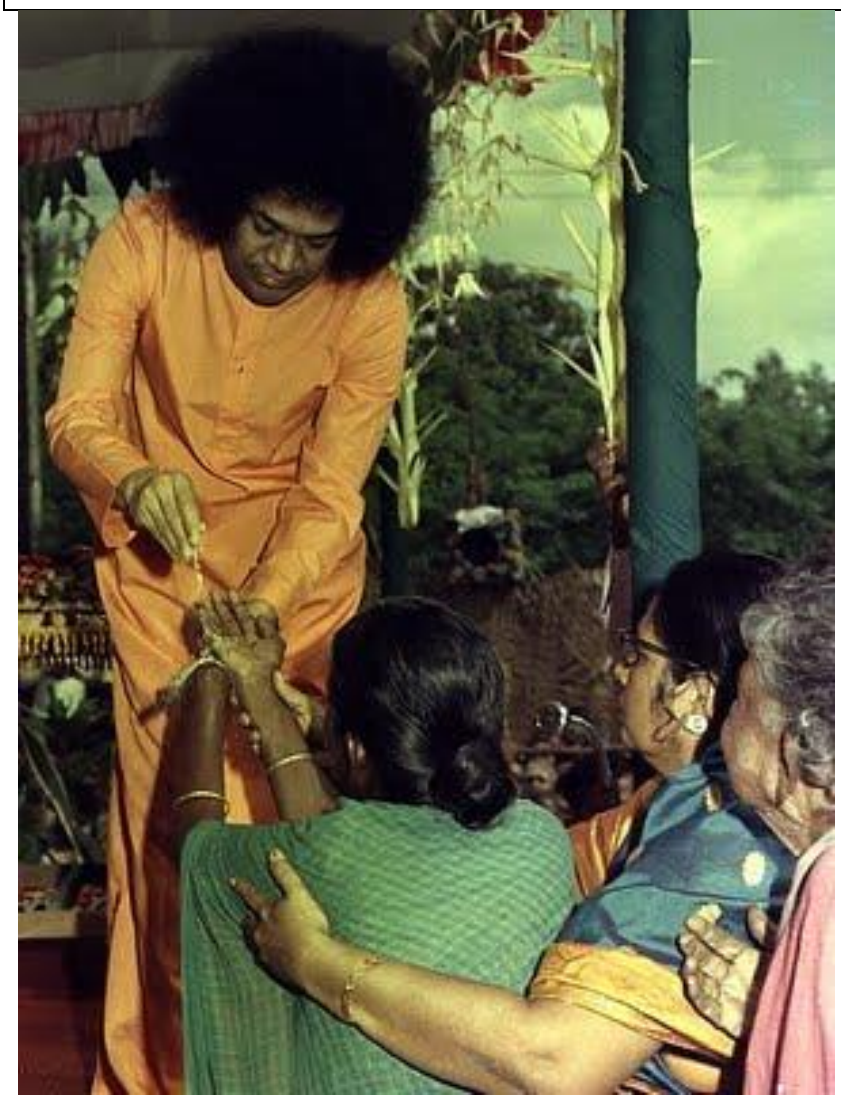
possessed admirable qualities. How these Gods could decide that onion was the greatest? Sensing their grievance, the Gods spoke up. They said, 'There is no doubt that all of you possess commendable qualities. But onion has one additional and special trait which none of you can boast of. That is: to retain the same smell unchanged throughout life! That is why we have decided in its favour. Be like the onion. Whether you are happy or unhappy, comfortable or suffering, never abandon your trait of being devoted to God." This explanation satisfied all the aggrieved vegetables.

"Softly stroking his beard, Lord Brahma wished the winner, 'As long as I exist, may you possess a beard like me.' If you look closely at an onion, you will find a thin beard adorning it. Lord Vishnu blessed the onion, 'Cut vertically, you will display one of my insignia, the sankha (conch, shell). Cut horizontally, you will reveal another of my insignia, the chakra (disk).' Cut an onion and you will notice this. Lord Siva blessed it, 'I will give you a guarantee. Anyone trying to harm you is condemned to shed tears.' This too is well within the experience of everybody!"

This simple tale of the humble vegetable conveys a profound truth. A person who possesses staunch, unwavering devotion to God is supreme. He will be righteous. He will be blessed with God's grace. Nobody can cause harm to him.

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 17
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CHAPTER 18 - DEAR TO THE DEPRIVED AND NEAR TO THE NEEDY



Difficulties are created to increase the yearning and to sift the sincere devotee from the rest. ~ Baba ~

ADVERSITY BRINGS GOD CLOSER

In Sri Maha Bharath, the Pandavas completed their exile in the forests and safely returned home. Kunthi Devi, their mother, was overjoyed. In gratitude, she bowed and offered salutations to Lord Krishna. He said, "My dear aunt, is there

anything more you want? I will grant it." She answered humbly, "Oh, Lord Krishna, it was only because my sons were undergoing unbearable hardships in the forests and living on roots and tubers, You were constantly with them and guarding them. Similarly, I can earn Your support and protection, Your sweet and intimate love and Your proximity - only when I have been in difficulties. So, I pray to you to grant me only hardships all the time."

A similar incident connected to Sri Sathya Sai's life is worth recalling. Swami decided that in one particular year, summer classes would be held in Ooty and took all the students there. When the classes ended and just before setting out for Bangalore, He told them, "As you have come all the way to Ooty, go for sight-seeing; look around and enjoy all the beauty in God's creation." The students insisted that Swami should accompany them. Otherwise, they said, they too would not go. Their idea was to get themselves photographed along with Swami in the scenic surroundings. Swami agreed and arranged bus transport to go to Dodabetta, a fine spot situated 8,000 feet above sea level. He told the boys to go ahead and arrange to take photographs and that He would join them there soon.

Sometime after they left, Swami left Nandana Vanam for Dodabetta by car. After His departure, two young men came to Nandana Vanam to see Him. On learning that Swami was on His way to Dodabetta, they too left for Dodabetta on motorcycle. In their anxiety to reach and in fact overtake Swami's car, they drove at high speed. Persons travelling with Swami in His car wondered, "Who are these boys? They are driving too fast. They must be rowdies." Baba corrected

them, "No, no. You should not rush to conclusions without knowing the facts. They are eager to have My darshan."
At a turn on the road, the young men on the motorcycle came too close to Swami's car at a high speed. They lost control and fell down. Immediately Swami had his car stopped. He went to them and wiped the dust and dirt off their bodies and gently reprimanded them, "My dear boys, are you hurt? Why are you driving at high speed? You should not do such rash things. If you wanted to see Swami, you could have come to Nandana Vanam." The boys replied, "Swami, we very much wanted to see You. Now that we met with this mishap, we have got not only Your darshan but also Your sparshan (touch) and sambhashan too (conversation). If we had not fallen off like this, You would not have come so close to us; You would not have patted us on our heads so affectionately and You would not have talked to us with such sweet intimacy. So, Swami, even if You give us any amount of hardship and adversity, grant us also Your darshan, sparshan and sambhashan. In order to receive the bliss of this kind, we will be prepared to undergo any amount of suffering."

After narrating this touching tale of love and compassion, Bhagavan Baba said, "God does not bestow as much closeness and love when you are comfortable and enjoying life as when you are in trouble and suffering the pangs of adversity. In God's view of things, both suffering and happiness are equal. Those who love God with all their heart and soul will have no desires. There are any number of people who are ruined for lack of sincere faith; but there is not a single believer abandoned by God. None, none whatsoever!"

"I TOO, FEAR HER!"

Once morning, women devotees were entering the audience hall in Prashanti Nilayam to have darshan of Swami. They were observing due silence and were also walking in orderly lines. But a lady volunteer at the entrance was curt and rude in her manners and was using somewhat impolite words while trying to hustle them inside. Many women felt bad about her behaviour. One of them was very much upset. While she came to Prashanti Nilayam to attain mental tranquility, she thought, this insensate volunteer was causing more unrest in her mind. She decided to inform Swami accordingly. To her good fortune, Bhagavan Baba gave an interview to her along with some women devotees.

She could have utilized that sublime opportunity to raise her personal issues with Swami. Instead, she chose to ventilate her grievance at the inappropriate conduct of the volunteer at the entrance. As soon as she set foot in the interview room, she burst out, "Swami, did you notice that lady volunteer on the women's side who is talking too much and using harsh words? She is disturbing our peace of mind even in this holy place. Why did You have that volunteer posted on duty at the entrance, Swami?" As He heard this tirade, Swami who was seated on His throne, bent slightly forward and said to her, "Bangaru, I will let you know a secret. I too fear her!" The devotee was surprised but delighted and went into peals of laughter on hearing Baba's well-kept secret! The whole room was filled with laughter.

Here is a meaningful spiritual lesson given by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai to His devotees. He did not dismiss that volunteer in anger for her rough conduct. At the same time, with a simple soothing word, He swept away the grievance of this genuinely hurt devotee and pacified her with His humour and love. Baba thus exhorts all His devotees, "If you too face any problem or difficulty in life and get upset, recall My sweet words and jovial conversation and delight in them. Thereby you will be able to forget your grief or hurt more easily."

Often did that devotee receive rough treatment again at the hands of the same volunteer at the entrance of the audience hall. But she could bear it with equanimity by simply recalling the sweet, disarming and frolicsome words of Swami and happily laughing within herself.

Whenever you are troubled by life's problems, recollect

Swami's divine discourses, exhortations, parables and tales. Your troubles will be swept away like dark clouds driven away by wind. This incarnation in human form of the Eternal Universal Supreme Reality, the personification of Truth, Awareness and Bliss, the embodiment of unbounded compassion, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai is showering divine bliss (ananda) on humanity and enabling mankind to easily cross the difficult-to-cross ocean of birth and death.

NINE TYPES OF BHAKTHI

According to Sri Maha Bhagavatha, sravan (hearing), keerthan (singing praises), smaran (remembering), pada sevan (touching feet), vandana (salutation), archana (worshipping), dasya (serving), sakhya (friendship) and Athma nivedan (surrender) are the nine types of devotion to God. These are like steps that lead by stages to reach and merge with God.

Let us consider an illustration that holds a mirror, as it were, to the experience of hundreds of thousands of devotees visiting Prashanti Nilayam. First of all, we hear quite a lot about Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. We hear that Sri Sathya Sai stays in the holy place of Puttaparthi in the Anantapur District, that He gives public audience morning and evening every day in the audience hall in Prashanti Nilayam, that He is clothed in a long robe of red colour, that He wears a distinctive crown of black hair, and that He presents a magnetic, divine vision to the onlooker. We also hear that the very sight of Bhagavan gives indescribable happiness and that He can relieve every suffering by a mere touch or word. We hear that He can materialize any and everything by a mere movement of His divine hand and that He can cure any disease by His mere Will. We hear hundreds of such experiences from all sides. **This is the first stage: sravan (hearing).**

Back home, the whole household will gather together and exchange notes and experiences. "Have you heard this?... Have you also heard about this miracle?... This wonder?... Sri Sathya Sai Baba is God-incarnate, they say, ... He is an ocean of mercy. He is the embodiment of compassion and love. We recount instances of every such attribute and, in the process, we sing His praises. **This is the second stage: keerthan.**

We are led to a strong desire to visit Puttaparthi some day and have Swami's darshan. The mind fills with Swami. We remember Swami's divine leelas and mahimas (signs of divinity) and we are suffused with wonderment, and anticipation as well as intense pleasure. We dream of Swami while asleep; we think of Swami when awake**. This is the**

third stage: smaran.

Then, on one blessed day, we reach Puttaparthi. We go into the audience hall for darshan. Swami moves slowly towards us, radiating flame coloured illumination, and stops right in front of us. We forget ourselves in immense happiness. We salute Him in a gesture of obeisance at His Lotus Feet and touch our eyes with our hands, so blessed. **This then is the fourth stage: pada sevan (touching feet).**

Swami graciously invites us into the interview room. Beaming with pleasure, we troop into the room and sit at His Lotus Feet. He sits on His throne very close to us. We look at Him in unbelievingly wonder and rejoice at our good fortune. **This is the fifth stage: vandana (salutation).**

We place flowers at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. Bhagavan tells us, "Bangaru, I do no want these flowers that fade in no time. What I want is the other flower, your heart!" When we hear Swami's mellifluous voice, a thousand musical instruments sing in our inner consciousness. **This is the sixth stage: archana (worship).**

Then, Bhagavan casts his cool, refreshing looks at us and asks smiling enchantingly, "Bangaru, what do you want?" We reply, "Swami, if you are kind enough to allow it, we will stay here serving you." He enquires, "What will you do here?" We say, "We will do whatever you order, Swami." **This is the seventh stage: dasya (serving).**

After some conversation, we become more self-assured, and bolder. We develop some closeness, friendship with Swami.

We tell him about our problems. Swami assures us, "Bangaru, Why fear when I am here? I am in your home; I am always with you; I am ever by your side; ; you will find me within sight whenever you need Me. I will protect you at all times." This close companionship gives us a lot of self-confidence and courage. **This is the eighth stage: sakhya (friendship).**

After some days, Bhagavan agains asks us, "What do you want?" We have reached where we are able to reply, "Swami, I need nothing. I am completely Yours. Use me as Your instrument. I am merely incidental, a mere tool in Your hands." **This is the ninth stage: Athma nivedan (surrender).**

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai says, "First, I will give you whatever you ask for. Later, I make you ask for what I have come to give you."

Aum Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Aum Santhih, Santhih, Santhih
End of Chapter 18
Aum Saieashwaraaya Vidmahey Sathya Devaaya Dheemahi
thannas sarva(f) prachodayaat(u) ||

CONCLUSION

The Sacred Life Story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Lord of the Universe, Incarnation of the Universal Absolute, embodiment of boundless mercy, succour of the afflicted is now complete. No, No, it never complete. It is continuing, it is unending… May the personification of Truth, Awareness and Bliss conver every blessing on tall the worlds.

As I pray to Him with all my heart and soul, I respectfully offer this *Divya Pusthakam* (Holy Book), Thapovanam, which reflects Swami's divine glory, at His divine Lotus Feet.

BENEDICTION (PHALA SHRUTHI)

Parayanam of this holy book brings the beatific, divine form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to the reader's mind with the abundant grace of Bhagavan. His divine name dances on

his tongue and lips. Baba said once, "The gardener orders the labourer to dig. The labourer just obeys and digs on. It is for the gardener to decide how much of the material should go to each plant. Similarly, My order is that you perform namasmaran and roopa dhyan (mental repetition of the name and meditation of the form). You go on with your task; it is My job to see where and how much to allocate the fruits thereof." Let us concentrate on implementing Baba's command in earnest. It is for Him to rescue us from the crushing wheels of the cycle of birth and death.

Swami's supreme divinity, Swami's boundless compassion and Swami's unfathomable love, displayed time and again, in incident after incident, overwhelm us with astonishment, yearning and also supreme happiness. We soon develop a sense of non-attachment (vairagya bhava) as we realize that everything lies in the hands of the all-controlling Baba and that we are merely toys in His divine hands. It frees us from the bonds of worry that beset our lives. In due course, it leads us to realization of Self (athma sakshathkar). It is an established fact that the choking mesh of deeds of past lives (karma bandhan) is torn aside if we sing in praise of Bhagavan with full-throated ardour (keerthan), if we incessantly meditate on Swami and if we do unremitting service to Swami and in His name.

Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavan transcends every other god. Therefore, people professing any faith and religion, people from any state, country, or land, indeed the entire humanity, may read this Holy Book. Swami says, "If you are a Christian, be a good Christian; if a Muslim, be a good Muslim... I have come not to divert you from your faith but to build up strong

faith in your own religion." Sai Faith is nothing but harmonisation of all faiths and to stress the interconnection of the basics of all major religions of the world (sarva matha dharma sammatham is Sai matham).

Accordingly, devotional reading of this sacred book strengthens a person's belief in divinity and faith in his own religion. Thereby, he will be inspired to adhere to the right path, the path of divinity. After reading about Sri Sathya Sai's divinity, people from hundreds of countries pray, "Swami, kindly give us too, the exhilarating experience of witnessing instances of your divinity." They receive Baba's blessings in ample measure; they forget themselves as they are showered with Bhagavan's compassion and love. This is a fascinating process going on every moment all over the world in this age of Kali Yuga. This is an open secret, a divine secret, known to everyone!

One may master the Vedas and the Upanishads. But to understand bhakthi is no easy task. This Life Story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a Veda about the Veda Purusha, the Divine, to whom all Vedas are dedicated. Reading of this Veda makes it all the easier to understand the essentiality of bhakthi, which is love of God. Whoever reads or listens to the Life Story morning and evening with unyielding devotion will attain everything beneficial in life and also will get relieved from the cycle of birth and deaths quite easily. That being the case, it goes without saying that worldly problems one faces in life are resolved automatically by the grace of Bhagavan. There is absolutely no room for doubt that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba will shower on His devotees' compassion and love and bless them with earthly

happiness and spiritual ananda.

Baba says, "How can I fail to remember one who always remembers Me?" He also said,
"Janma karma cha Me Divyani"
[My life and My work are divine.]

Let us read the Sacred Life Story of Bhagavan again and again; let us remember Him over and over again; let our devotion invite Bhagavan's favour; let us witness the glorious spectacle of the entire world suffused with Bhagavan's love. Let us attain immortality!

Sai Easwarasrayo marthyo Sathya Dharma Parayanah Papa Vyadhi Visuddhathma Yathi Sathya Sanathanam Jai Sai Ram!

Hail the Glory of Lord Sai!
Om Sri Sathya Sai Parabrahmane Namah
Om Santhih, Santhih, Santhih

MANGALA ARATI

Aum Jai Jagadeesha hare…
Samastha LokaH Sukhino Bhavantu X 3
End of Thapovanam: Sri Sathya Sai Sathcharithra

This is a complete and exact soft-copy of the Thapovanam book with more pictures in PDF Format. by Sis.Sudha Ram
References:
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Love All Serve All ❖ JAI SAI RAM ❖ Help Ever Hurt Never